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ABSTRACT

Profiles of the educational systems in the seven Central American countries are presented, along with an introductory essay by Rene Greenwald, "Higher Education in Central America: Trends and Developments: 1985-86." Country profiles are provided for Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama. For each country, an overview of the elementary/secondary and postsecondary system is presented, along with descriptions of specific colleges and universities and information on student placement in the U.S. university system. Teacher training and sources of financial aid for overseas study are also briefly reviewed in the profiles. Sources of information on U.S. education in each country are also identified, and glossaries of terms are included. The essay identifies 18 trends developing in Central America and indicates how U.S. institutions can begin to respond to regional development needs. Trends include: emphasis on the development of in-country, graduate-level programs; continuing demand for university and technical-level training; increased tuition fees at public universities; and the prospect that financial aid for study abroad will focus on fields that are not offered domestically and are a priority for national development, especially at the graduate level. (SW)

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Regional Education Profile:

CENTRAL AMERICA

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The introductory essay on Higher Education Trends and Developments was first presented by Rene Greenwald, IIE's Representative in Mexico, at the Fourth Biennial International Education Seminars for Educational Associates in March 1986. The Country Profiles were prepared by IIE/Mexico staff in consultation with USIS personnel, binational commissions, and higher education institutions in each country.

September 1986

Higher Education in Central America:
Trends and Developments: 1985-86

by Rene Greenwald, IIE Representative
Mexico and Central America

Central America has long been considered a land of banana companies and coffee plantations, marimba bands and pina coladas, dirt poor campesinos and a handful of wealthy families, and of course military dictators. Throughout the history of our hemisphere, the politics of the small nation-states of Central America have rarely made a splash in the international political arena. However, two events in 1979 turned the attention of the world to this region:

1. a coup in El Salvador which further contributed to instability in the region, and

2. the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua by a group of rebel forces, the Sandinistas.

Since that time, the dynamics of the politics and economics of this region have commanded the increased attention of not only our hemisphere but also the rest of the world.

The impact of the political turmoil in these two nations has only emphasized the conflict which has been brewing in the region, as guerrilla activity and refugee migration have affected nearly all of the Central American republics. Guatemala and Honduras have both experienced increased guerrilla activities. The migration of refugees and subsequent border conflicts have become more frequent. Uninvited refugees from Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua are relocating in Honduras, Costa Rica and Mexico.

Central America has also suffered from the international economic and financial crisis of the past several years. The adverse external conditions, together with poor management and structural economic weaknesses, have produced high inflation, drops in currency, economic stagnation, under development, and debt-service problems throughout the region. Since 1979 the economies of the Central American countries have tended to contrast. For example, Panama, the smallest country in the region, with a population of two million, is the most indebted country per capita in Latin America. She has a foreign debt of 3.7 billion dollars.

As we discuss Central America we must keep in mind that the countries are too small and too close to one another, their affairs too closely intertwined, and the impact of what happens in one greatly affects the others. We should also keep in mind that democracy has returned to the region, with the exception of Nicaragua, and some would argue that democracy exists there as well.

The chapters which follow this essay discuss educational developments in detail in each country of Central America. In this introduction, let me identify 18 trends I see developing in Central America and make some specific suggestions on how U.S. institutions can begin to respond to regional development needs in a practical and cost-effective way that I believe will bring us closer to the 21st century. To begin with the trends:

1. High priority is being given to the development of in-country graduate level programs.

2. The demand for university and technical level training will continue to increase as students become aware that a good education can be the key to better jobs and a higher income.

3. National defense budgets will increase and education budgets decrease.

4. The Kissinger Commission and the subsequent Jackson plan have created a greater interest in U.S. education at all socio-economic levels.

5. Research is suffering because of a lack of funds.

6. University libraries have been forced to cancel subscriptions to professional journals and to cut back on the purchase of new books.

7. Public universities will be forced to increase tuition fees. Federal governments have been hit hard by debt problems and other demands on their funds. Universities must begin to earn their keep.

8. Educational credit organizations will lend money for study outside the country in fields that are not offered domestically and are a priority for national development. These will mainly be at the graduate level.

9. Low salaries and the absence of incentives have caused a decrease in the number of full time professors and a shortage of professors with post graduate degrees and research experience.

10. Those professors who are full time must seek part time employment elsewhere. Thus, they have less time to dedicate to their students and for general involvement in university activities.

11. The profile of the student coming to the U.S. will be changing as new U.S.I.A. and U.S.A.I.D. training programs develop. The new type of student will be older, probably around 25, be from a lower socio-economic class than you have traditionally seen, and will have a public schooling versus private.

12. We will begin to see more and more public universities use admission tests.

13. Students are looking to Mexico, Brazil and Spain for university level studies. These sites are cheaper and present no language problems.

14. A high percentage of university level students work full time. As a result, the duration of the degree program is prolonged and students do not tend to worry about getting top grades. To pass the course is their goal.

15. Parents of students studying in the U.S. are finding it more difficult to obtain dollars at the official exchange rates. The black market becomes their only alternative. This method of purchasing dollars increases the cost of a U.S. education by at least 30-50%.

16. The quality of public education at all levels has been decreasing. The better secondary schools and universities are generally the private ones since they have funds from tuition fees to help maintain the quality of their programs.

17. A very low percentage of students entering university level programs earn a degree. Approximately 10% in El Salvador and Mexico.

18. Faculty travel abroad to attend professional meetings will be reduced.

The 1984 report by the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America greatly contributed to a new U.S. interest in the region and the development of the Jackson plan. The United States Information Agency and the Agency for International Development have put together a full spectrum of educational opportunities to reach talented Central Americans of all sectors of society.

U.S.I.A. developed the Central American Program of Undergraduate Scholarships, or CAMPUS, as it is known in the region. This program has three broad objectives:

1. to improve the range and quality of educational alternatives for young Central Americans of limited financial means,

2. to match educational opportunities in the United States with skill shortages in Central America, and

3. to build lasting ties between the United States and the countries of Central America.

U.S.I.A. designed four programs at the undergraduate level to help achieve these goals. Two programs, for teachers from Honduras and Belize, will upgrade the teachers' knowledge in the areas of mathematics, science, and teaching methods. The other two programs are for upper division undergraduates from Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Panama. The programs will enable these students to complete their third and fourth years of studies in one of the following areas: education, communication, social sciences, business administration, engineering, natural sciences, or nutrition. The scholarship awards range from 18 to 30 months, including English training, the academic program and enhancement activities.

One hundred and fifty-four scholars arrived in the U.S. this past January. They were divided by field of study into groups of 10 to 16. Each group is attending one of the 12 universities which were selected competitively on the basis of their resources in the following areas: ESL program for Spanish speakers, academic and cultural orientation, high quality programs related to project objectives, enhancement activities, academic and personal counseling, housing facilities allowing contact with U.S. students, and (very important) institutional cost sharing.

A.I.D. has developed the Central American Peace Scholarships, better known as CAPS. This program is targeted towards Central Americans from socially and economically disadvantaged background. CAPS is the largest training initiative in A.I.D.'s history and the mission will have primary implementation responsibilities. Candidates for CAPS will be in development related fields and will include both short-term and long-term training in technical, vocational and community colleges as well as universities.

Two new A.I.D. projects to assist Central American universities are expected to be initiated in FY 87: the Regional Technical Aid Project II (RTAC-II) , to make textbooks more available at lower cost to university professors; and a new university linkage project, providing small grants to Central American and U.S. partner institutions in fields of mutual interest.

U.S.I.A. and A.I.D. expect to meet the Jackson plan's target of 10,000 scholarships over the next five years. A.I.D. plans to have 5,000 technical scholarships for short-term training and 2,000 academic scholarships for post graduate and undergraduate studies. U.S.I.A. will offer 3,000 academic scholarships at the undergraduate and graduate levels. These figures, however, are subject to Congressional authorization and funding at adequate levels.

Our neighbors to the south need better prepared people in the public, private and education sectors who can respond to development needs. Both U.S. government initiatives are designed to help meet these needs. U.S. colleges and universities can also contribute by establishing linkages with Central American universities, conducting joint laboratory research projects, arranging practical training for recent graduates, offering short-term intensive seminars here and abroad, sending complimentary copies of professional journals to Central American university libraries, and in general providing a better balance between academic and practical training. We have much to gain by having a healthier and stabler region to the south.

The chapters which follow outline the educational system in each country, describe educational institutions and the educational "ladder", and briefly review teacher training and financial aid sources for overseas study. Several people in Central America cooperated with IIE on this Regional Education Profile: the USIS posts, binational centers, and institution of higher education in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama, as well as the Embassy in Belize, provided information, arranged appointments with local education officials, and critiqued the drafts. Shelley Romoff and Ruth Martinez from IIE-Mexico were responsible for the research and the final draft.

COUNTRY EDUCATION PROFILE
BELIZE
1986

STUDENT PLACEMENT IN THE US UNIVERSITY SYSTEM: Belizean students are often more cosmopolitan than other foreign students. Most students are able to respond to the challenge and atmosphere of a US university although there is little intellectual stimulation. Students do not have access to libraries and school facilities after school hours.

Generally, the more able students are encouraged to take the G.C.E. or Caribbean Examinations Council "O" Level examinations.

Currently about 300 students take these tests annually. Of these, only about 70 obtain four or more GCE or CXC passes with A, B or C grades.

In most of the more developed countries this would be regarded as a very low standard for admission to post-secondary programs.

Nevertheless, the experience of the BELCAST authorities is that the quality of the students admitted to the post-secondary programs is good. The academic records of those who proceed directly to post-secondary programs abroad, after completion of secondary studies in Belize, and of the larger number who proceed to advanced studies abroad after completion of post-secondary programs in Belize, are consistently good.

The apparently low level of average attainment is attributed to three main causes: 1) the inadequate preparation which students receive at primary school level where only 38 percent of the teachers have had formal training, 2) the low level of qualifications of many secondary teachers -- apart from the 30 percent who are university graduates, most are high school graduates with, perhaps, a few GCE "O" Levels and no formal training, 3) shortages of teaching resources, text books, teaching materials, and laboratory facilities in the schools.

Completion of secondary school in Belize represents 12 years of schooling. BELCAST programs add two to three additional years of schooling, depending on the program.

Grading practices in Belize tend to be more severe than in the US. Generally in Belize, a B is a good grade and is not easily achieved. A grade of C represents basic understanding and achievement. Students with a grade point average of A or B can be considered a very good risk. Students from the Belize Technical College with a grade point average of 3.5 or higher are very well-prepared students. Most schools will provide the student's rank if the grade point average is 3.5 or higher.

Admissions officers should look at a student's high school transcripts for a consistent performance and a minimum average. In addition, the student's motivation, school and faculty should be considered. The main feeder schools from Belize to the US are BELCAST, St. John's, and Belize Technical College.

Few students seek admission to US universities directly from their secondary level programs in Belize. Admissions officers are advised to request the syllabus from the student's program, since the course descriptions generally do not provide much information.

Admissions officers may choose to waive requirements for achievement examinations if students have obtained a pass on any of their GCE examinations, which are subject oriented. The General Paper can also be considered in place of the TOEFL.

Although many Belizeans grow up with English as their second language. Students who have performed well through secondary school will have sufficient English language capability to enter a college or university in the US. The primary language of many Belizean students is Creole, although students read and write English. Consequently, Belizeans will probably perform satisfactorily on the TOEFL, while their spoken English may not reflect their fluency.

Transfer of credits from post-secondary programs in Belize depends on the program. The standardization of most Science programs, is good, especially in "A" levels. This is also true for Mathematics, and Freshman English. Social Science credits may transfer depending on the course requirements. History credits should transfer if the student has achieved the "O" levels.

Students pursuing a major field of study begun in their post-secondary program in Belize should have ample credits transferred to allow graduation in two years. Students changing their major field of study may require three years of study to obtain their Bachelor's Degree. Students entering US undergraduate degree programs after completing their "A" levels in Belize may lack basic courses for their program and generally will not graduate in two years.

The youth of many Belizean students may be noted by admissions officers. Students may have completed an Associate's Degree program by age 18. Students in Belize normally begin school at age five rather than age six, and many students skip grades in the primary cycle. Consequently, students can enter high school at age 12 and finish by age 16.

EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM BACKGROUND: Belize has been an independent country since September 1981 and with 6.9 inhabitants per square kilometer has one of the lowest population densities in Central America and the Caribbean. The stated educational objectives of the government are: to further develop the pre-school program with emphasis on community involvement, and to provide primary education of an improved quality for all children of the statutory school age.

In 1981 the Government of Belize spent approximately 5 percent of the GNP on education.

The education sector received 21 percent of the total government budget in fiscal year 1983. This increased percentage reflects the government's dramatic efforts to improve education.

Government provision for capital expenditure on education is rather modest. In 1983 2.5 percent of the budgeted total expenditure on education was earmarked for capital spending. However, this figure is misleading since most new investments in buildings and equipment for secondary education are financed from external sources. It is interesting to note that a little less than two-thirds of all government expenditure on education is in the form of grants to denominational schools and only one-third is for government run educational facilities.

The distribution of recurrent public expenditure by level and type of education shows that three-fifths is spent on primary education, one-fourth on secondary education (general, technical/vocational, agricultural), and a little more than one-tenth on tertiary education.

The Government of Belize makes financial provision for pre-school education and for formal schooling at primary, secondary and post-secondary levels. The great majority of schools are government-aided, denominational schools, but there are also some government (publicly-owned and managed) pre-school establishments, 22 government primary schools and 6 government secondary schools.

Private expenditure on education whether government, government-aided or private schools helps offset recurrent expenses of schools.

Primary education is free in government and government-aided schools, while private primary schools collect fees ranging between Bz $15 and 40 per year.

All secondary education institutions charge tuition fees from BZ $50 to BZ $250 per year.

There are also a great variety of other fees, such as entrance fees, laboratory fees, library fees and graduation fees.

In addition, pupils and students must purchase their textbooks, a set of which may cost BZ $50 per year for grade VIII pupils and up to BZ$ 100 per year for secondary general education students.

Donations and resources from fundraising activities constitute yet another source of revenue for secondary education institutions.

The various religious denominations present in Belize have traditionally been active in the field of education. Methodist involvement in education dates to the 1830's and the Roman Catholic Church founded its first school in the 1850's. It is largely due to the commitment of the churches that Belize's literacy rate is as high as 90 percent today.

Out of a total of 223 primary schools in 1982, 186 were run by religious denominations and accounted for 90.1 percent of the total primary enrollment. In 1980, 11 of the 21 secondary institutions were run by the churches, and their enrollment represented 54.3 percent of the total enrollment at this level.

The current Belize government elected to maintain the long standing Church/State partnership in education. This relationship is governed by the Educational Ordinance of 1962 and its successive amendments. Under this ordinance the primary and secondary schools run by the religious sector officially became "Government-aided schools", entitled to grants-in-aid from public funds.

According to present regulations, aid to assisted primary schools consists of: 1) payment-in-full of teachers' salaries, 2) a supplementary grant at a fixed rate per pupil, 3) a 50/50 cost sharing of construction and equipment of school buildings and 4) a 50/50 cost sharing on maintenance.

The government provides for 60 percent of teachers' salaries and finances up to 30 percent of other recurrent expenditures, including major repair of buildings for the secondary schools. Construction and equipment costs for the secondary schools are financed from external sources.

In the past, the churches practiced educational freedom in establishing and running their own schools. This led to a proliferation and redundancy in institutions, particularly at the primary level.

The Government is attempting to improve the situation by inducing the religious denominations to consolidate small, nonviable primary schools. Also the denominations are allowed to establish new schools only when minimum population criteria are realized.

However, there are still many small schools. Fifty percent of all primary schools have less than 100 pupils, four-fifths of which are located in rural areas. More than two-thirds of all primary schools located in urban areas have 200 or more pupils, but only one-fifth of the primary schools located in rural areas reach this size.

The government now initiates the opening of new secondary level schools, thus minimizing overlapping and fragmentation caused by unplanned growth. Church/State cooperation has increased during the last two decades and all secondary schools run by the religious sector have become grant-aided.

An outstanding characteristic of the education system in Belize has been the high participation rate of pupils within the 6 - 14 compulsory age range.

This is due to the government's policy of recognition and support of church sponsored schools, thus ensuring that all who want to enroll will be educated at the primary level.

In 1982 the total enrollment at all levels of education was 44,945, approximately 30 percent of the total population. Of the total enrollment, 84.6 percent was in primary education, 14 percent in secondary education, and 1.4 percent in tertiary education.

Belize has a very young population.

In 1982, 46 percent of the population was under the age of 14 and 60 percent was under 20 years of age.

The number of births increased from 4,450 in 1970 to 6,266 in 1980 according to the census of that year.

Even if a relatively high rate of emigration from Belize can be assumed, it is clear that there will have to be a sustained increase in the number of primary schools for years to come (possibly at an average annual rate of about 300).

Competition for space at the secondary level is keen. Secondary institutions absorb less than half of the 3,700 pupils who complete primary education each year.

At present, not more than 400 post-secondary places are available each year. The fact that 1,500 students complete secondary education each year testifies to a very low attrition rate at that level.

About 50 of the 1,500 students completing secondary education annually undertake post-secondary courses abroad and about 350 enroll in post-secondary programs in Belize. The remaining 1,000 plus graduating students end their formal education at this point. Their secondary school diplomas are widely accepted in Belize.

The school year in Belize normally begins at the end of August. For primary schools it consists of 380 sessions spread over three terms totaling 40 weeks. Secondary schools at least 300 sessions over two or three terms.

Tertiary institutions follow an academic calendar based on three terms or two semesters.

Teaching periods vary from 25 to 35 minutes for primary classes and from 30 to 45 minutes for secondary classes.

On average, there are 35 periods per week in both primary and secondary schools.

English is the official language and the language of instruction in all schools, although students' first language may differ, depending on their race.

PRE-SCHOOL AND PRIMARY EDUCATION: Pre-school education is offered by private, government and community-based institutions, which charge fees ranging between BZ $2.50 to $5 per week.

There are currently 55 pre-schools, three of which are government schools. Enrollment in pre-school programs is approximately 2,000 children in the three to five age group.

Education at this level is not obligatory.

Most pre-schools utilize teachers' aides to ensure a ratio of one adult for every 15 pupils. Staff training programs and workshops for the development of curriculum materials are organized by the Education Office (EO) (Pre-school) to guarantee an acceptable standard at this level.

UNICEF assists in the development of pre-schools through a contribution to the salary of the E.O., grants and the supply of equipment to some schools.

In addition to the government pre-school and primary school establishments, there are some private pre-school establishments and 11 private primary schools.

Primary education consists of eight grades known as Infants I and II and Standards I through VI. Education at this level is compulsory by law for pupils between the ages of six and fourteen, though most students enter at age five.

Education Profile: Belize

Although primary education is free in government-run, government-aided schools, parents are expected to buy textbooks for their children despite financial hardships.

While primary school curriculum is officially oriented towards a broad general education, it is supposed to have specific relevance to urban or rural settings.

The Ministry of Education issues curriculum guides in the subject areas of Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies and expects to provide guidelines in the other subject areas soon.

The distribution of study time in the primary school is heavily loaded in favor of Language Arts and Mathematics.

No compulsory execution is attached to the curriculum guides and schools are free to translate the guides into programs with whatever emphasis they desire.

Study programs for the main subjects in the primary school curriculum are prepared by the Ministry's Curriculum Development Unit. Study workshops are held throughout the country to help teachers utilize ministry programs. School broadcasts supplement these study programs. In addition, some 50 schools in rural districts participate in the Rural Education and Agriculture Project (REAP).

Ministry of Education officials consistently stress that Belize is both a Caribbean and Central American country. As such, children are expected to learn Spanish in addition to English, which is the official language.

At present Spanish is taught in all secondary schools but only in some primary schools.

In 1982 the Belize National Examination (BNE), an examination for students completing primary education, was introduced. The test serves three purposes: 1) it provides certification of the completion of the primary school program (the Primary School Leaving Certificate), 2) it provides a basis for selection of meritorious students for 250 scholarships and 3) it serves as the basis for selection of students for admission to secondary schools.

Students are tested in English, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies.

SECONDARY EDUCATION: Although primary school enrollment is relatively high, secondary enrollment has grown only in certain areas. At present, the transition rate between primary and secondary education is approximately 55 to 63 percent.

Secondary schools retain only about half of the pupils who enter through the four-year cycle.

There are 22 secondary level schools in Belize, 16 of which are managed by the churches or boards of governors and are government-aided. Six are government-run schools.

Unlike primary schools, secondary schools charge tuition fees ranging between BZ $10 and BZ$ 25 per month for a ten-month school year.

Scholarships are awarded to pupils by many private organizations (religious, service clubes, etc.). The government offers 200 secondary scholarships per year.

The cost of secondary schooling may serve to limit availability in some cases. In addition to tuition fees there are a host of other fees for registration, special subjects, and textbooks. These vary from school to school but generally add considerably to the cost of secondary education. The scholarships awarded by the government and by a number of private organizations help alleviate the burden for some pupils.

After standard six, students may opt to enter a four-year secondary school or a three-year junior secondary school (similar to the first two years of high school in the US), and continue to the final two years of a senior secondary school (similar to the last two years of high school in the US).

The four years of secondary school are known as the First, Second, Third and Fourth forms.

Entry to each school is determined by the school administration using the pupil's performance on either the Belize National Selection Examination or the National Common Entrance Examination as a guide. A passing grade on the senior secondary school entrance examination is 50 percent, although this can vary according to available class space.

In 1982 the Ministry of Education introduced the multi-purpose Belize National Selection Examination (BNSE) designed to replace three examinations previously required at the end of the primary cycle (Primary Certificate Examination, Government Scholarship Examination, and National Common Entrance Examination).

The BNSE tests ability in five areas. These are:

1) English language including English usage, comprehension and composition
2) Mathematics
3) Social Studies
4) Science
5) Learning Potential

Entrance to secondary school and the award of scholarship depend on performance in all five areas.

The performance on the Learning Potential is not reported on the primary certificate.

All available seats in secondary schools are normally filled each year. The demand far exceeds the supply.

Secondary schools generally rank performance by percentile. Most schools include the 50th to 55th percentile while the better schools include the 70th percentile. Generally, repetition is allowed in Form I and the attrition rate is high, particularly after Form I.

In 1981 Second Form enrollment was only 80 percent of the 1980 First Form enrollment.

The grading system followed by most secondary schools is based on a letter system and is equivalent to a scale of 0 - 100 points with 70 as the minimum passing grade.

In this system, an A+ is equal to a grade of 94 - 100, an A is equivalent to 90 - 93 points, a B+ is equivalent to a grade of 87 - 89, a B is equivalent to an 84 - 86, a C+ is a grade of 80 - 83, a C is awarded for a grade of 76 - 79, a D+ is equivalent to a grade of 73 - 75, a D is awarded for grades of 70 - 72, and an F or failing grade is equivalent to a grade of 0 - 69.

At St. John's College an E indicates failure with the possibility of a passing grade on the final report or a conditional failure. This grade can be issued only in the first semester of a two semester course, and can be changed only to a D or F as a final grade for that course.

Transcripts provide the student's rank in class for all subjects except Physical Education and Speech.

Students who receive an F in three or more subjects or a grade point average of less than 1.75 are placed on probation for the following semster.

St. John's College awards Honors in each subject. First Honors is awarded to the student obtaining the highest mark in a class, and Second Honors is awarded to the student obtaining the second highest mark.

Secondary schools are responsible for the development and execution of their programs. The lack of a binding curriculum in the lower forms of secondary school is detrimental to ensuring at least good minimum standards for all secondary students in the country.

The Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) conducts regular workshops on curriculum development for the subjects which it examines, which are primarily related to the upper forms of secondary school. This is the only systematic activity of its kind at this level.

The Belize Association of Secondary School Principals also acts as a unifying force on the range and quality of secondary education.

All secondary schools award diplomas to students who meet their graduation requirements.

Requirements are not standardized though requirements at many schools are similar.

The curriculum of secondary schools is predominantly aimed at preparing pupils for the General Certificate of Education (CGE) and CXC "O" level examinations.

Some schools also prepare pupils for the London Institute and Royal Society of Arts examinations. Pupils are encouraged to take these examinations although the examination fees and the extra charges made by some schools for certain subjects make this a costly form of certification.

Belizean society puts great stress on examinations and success or failure tends to have both an academic and a social interpretation. For students, an examination measures the value of their preparation efforts. Teachers use examination results to shape both what and how they teach. Employers use examinations to estimate the potential worth of their employees.

The government presently has no apparent intention to eliminate the wide variety of examinations. The great number of examinations which certify student performance reinforce the tendency to overdiversity in secondary level programs.

All junior and full secondary schools award their own diplomas in addition to the CXC and the GCE "O" level examinations certificates. These diplomas are becoming the main forms of certification due to weak performances and high fees for external examinations.

The secondary level schools offering the strongest academic programs in Belize City are: Anglican Cathedral College, Belize Technical College, Pallotti High School, St Catherine Academy, St. John's College, and Wesley College. In the Cayo District they are: Belmopan Comprehensive School and Sacred Heart College; in Orange Walk District - Muffies College and in the Stann Creek District, Ecumenical High School.

Two of the six secondary schools managed and administered by the Government are junior secondary schools located in Belize City. They offer three-year programs in academic, vocational industrial, and home management subjects. Students successfully completing these programs normally seek entry to the government managed Belize Technical College which offers a two-year course in technical studies. A few graduates enter private full secondary schools.

The four departments of the Belize Technical College offer technical and vocational courses at the craft (secondary) and technician (tertiary) levels.

The Belize Technical College admits students who have completed the Junior Secondary course or three years of secondary schooling elsewhere.

The two-year senior secondary program offers programs in the Sciences, Mathematics, Business Studies, Building Trades, Engineering Trades and Home Economics.

Admission to the Belize Technical College's secondary level programs is governed by a quota system in which an established percentage of students completing junior secondary school programs and a percentage of four-year secondary school students are admitted.

Students completing the Belize Technical College trade and technical programs can continue to post-secondary level studies in an Associate Degree program after meeting additional prerequisites to earn the high school diploma equivalent known as the "College Certificate". A program of academic courses, including Mathematics and English is required to earn this certificate.

The Belize Technical College senior secondary program follows the term system for the academic year which begins in early September and ends in June.

Secondary schools generally offer some technical or vocationally oriented courses such as Home Economics, Typing, Bookkeeping, Technical Drawing, Woodworking, and Metal Working.

The only educational establishment at the secondary level which has been designed to provide vocational training is the Belize Vocational Training Center (BVTC). The Center offers one-year courses (80 percent practical, 20 percent theoretical) in Plumbing, Electricity, Carpentry, Masonry or Auto Mechanics. General education subjects, including Science and Mathematics, are not taught.

These programs are offered to boys who have completed primary education and (preferably) who are already employed. The enrollment in 1983 was 60 pupils. There were 600 applicants.

The government managed Belmopan Comprehensive offers a four-year program in academic subjects, Business Studies, Home Economics, Woodwork, Metalwork and Agriculture.

The "Escuela Secundaria Mexico" offers technical, vocational and agricultural education programs.

In 1983 the government opened three new junior secondary schools and made all junior secondary schools four-year schools with curricula emphasizing agricultural, technical and vocational studies.

Two institutions offer extensive evening programs of continuing education. The Extension Department of St. John's College offers a high school equivalency program and a range of short courses. Belize Technical College offers evening courses preparing students for various G.C.E. "O" level examinations as well as commercial studies and trade subjects.

HIGHER EDUCATION: Belize does not have a third level institution or university of equivalent status and cannot at present provide opportunities for students to proceed to primary degree, professional or higher levels by pursuing studies within the country. However there are post-secondary courses leading to qualifications at sub-degree/sub-professional level, and Belize participated with other English-speaking Caribbean countries in the establishment of the University of the West Indies (UWI) to provide access for its citizens to full tertiary education. Also, Belizeans have access to institutions of higher learning in Mexico, Panama, the US, Canada and Great Britain.

Six institutions currently offer post-secondary education courses. These are:

Belize College of Arts, Science and Technology (BELCAST)
Belize School of Agriculture
Belize School of Nursing
Belize Teachers' College
Belize Technical College
St. John's College

Generally speaking, the entry requirement for two-year courses is a secondary school diploma with good grades, or G.C.E. "O" Level passes in prescribed subjects.

The two-year courses award the Associate's Degree which is equivalent to the GCE Advanced level certificate or the US Associate Degree.

St. John's College's sixth form and Belize Technical College's sixth form are British style sixth forms which cater to students presenting the GCE Advanced level examinations.

They award Associate Degrees at the completion of the course of studies.

Higher level programs are generally described as "third-year" programs and are offered by BELCAST.

An Associate Degree or the equivalent is required for admission to these programs, which award Advanced Diplomas.

A decision made by the Ministry of Education in 1981 regarding the make-up of BELCAST is no longer operative. At the present time, Belcast's essential function is to train teachers.

Cooperative agreements with higher education institutions abroad have created enrollment opportunities for Belizean students. Although Belize considers itself both a Caribbean and Central American country, it has closer ties with North America regarding tertiary education.

St. John's College (post-secondary division) is a fully recognized member of the Association of Junior Colleges in the US, and the diploma earned on completion of St. John's College Sixth Form is equivalent to the Associate Degree.

It is expected that this recognition will be extended to Belize Teacher's College (BELCAST). BELCAST is a full participating member of the Joint Board of Teacher Education and is linked to the Univeristy of the West Indies which accredits programs and appoints visiting examiners.

Negotiations between BELCAST and the University of the West Indies (UWI), regarding acceptance of Belizean Associate Degrees and Advanced Diplomas for admission to the higher level courses at that university are at an advanced stage.

The UWI has not had many entrants from Belize due to the expense of a full three-year course. However, the planned introduction of the Challenge Examination Scheme will allow students to complete, the first year of the UWI Social Sciences course, in Belize, at a fraction of the cost at the Mona Campus of UWI.

Representatives of BELCAST and the UWI are examining the kinds of assistance BELCAST requires to ensure that its graduates can be admitted to UWI courses.

Of the six institutions in Belize which offer post-secondary courses, three possess accommodation and facilities designed for post-secondary work and are devoted almost exclusively to post-secondary work. These are the Belize School of Agriculture, the Belize School of Nursing and the Belize Teachers' College. All three are government-owned institutions.

The Belize School of Agriculture is a "self-contained" institution in that it meets all requirements necessary for the conduct of its present programs from its own resources. It makes no demands on the facilities or staff of other institutions.

Belize Technical College and St. John's College are "mixed" institutions providing both secondary and post-secondary programs, but with the balance heavily in favor of the former.

Belize Technical College is government-owned, and is conducted under the aegis of the Ministry of Education.

St. John's College is a private institution which receives substantial government funding.

St. John's post-secondary division is administered by a Dean who reports to the President and has overall responsibility for the functioning, development and coordination of both secondary and post-secondary divisions. Only a few faculty members of 19 full-time members and 3 part-time staff are exclusively engaged on post-secondary programs. Most contribute to both levels.

A similar situation exists at Belize Technical College, most of the 26 post-secondary members also teach at the secondary level. The internal organization does not provide for a formal post-secondary division.

It is important to note that the exclusive post-secondary institutions only offer professional/vocational oriented programs. They account for about 36 percent of the annual post-secondary placements in Belize. The two "mixed" institutions cater to the remaining 64 percent and are involved in a much wider range of programs.

BELCAST

BELCAST receives its funding directly from the Ministry of Education.

The BELCAST teaching staff includes six full-time and nine part-time teachers, but the institution has no teaching facilities of its own.

Sixth form qualifications are required for admission to BELCAST's one-year post-secondary programs.

Students have several options at the sixth form. Students may opt to study for the "A" level examinations to receive the Associate Degree, or may obtain an Associate Degree in Business Studies, Building Construction, Mechanical or Electrical Engineering.

BELCAST's programs are offered at Belize Teachers' College, Belize Technical College and St. John's College facilities. All are post-secondary programs.

Short courses which satisfy particular needs are offered in addition to the following programs: 1) a one-year program to train secondary school teachers; 2) a two-year course for bilingual secretaries; 3) a one year business course; and 4) four three-year technology programs in medicine, veterinary medicine, pharmacy and fisheries; and 5) a three-year architectural technology course.

The Business program offered by BELCAST requires one to one-and-one half years of study and awards the diploma on completion of the course. This program offers professional rather than academic training.

BELCAST's program include liberal arts and professional training.

BELCAST programs follow an academic calendar based on a semester system, which generally runs from the end of August to May. In addition to Christmas and Easter, the following national holidays are observed: September 10, September 21, October 12, November 19, November 26, President's Day, March 9, May 1, May 24 and Election Day.

Belizean School of Agriculture (BSA)

The School of Agriculture is a post-secondary institution located at the Central Farm, Cayo District. The BSA was established in 1977 to offer a formal one-year certificate course in Agriculture.

Admission is granted to secondary school graduates, preferably to those holding GCE certificates in English and Mathematics, with exceptions made for graduates from the Youth Development Center or the 4-H Center.

Due to rural location, residential accommodations are provided for students. Present facilities confine total enrollment over the two-year course to about 40 students.

The BSA offers a one-year certificate level course and a two-year diploma course.

Students who successfully complete the certificate course may undertake another year's study to earn the BSA diploma.

The certificate level course focuses on practical training (four hours of field practice per day), although 19 formal lecture courses are offered.

The diploma course covers 20 subjects, all of which are mandatory.

Practical field work consists of hands on projects with livestock or crops. Students then submit a written project report.

The number of students enrolled each year in the certificate course ranged from 18 to 23 between 1977 and 1982, with an average rate of success of 90 percent. In 1981, 16 of the 18 students who started the certificate course graduated. Similarly, 9 of the 10 students enrolled in the diploma course were graduated in 1982.

Belize School of Nursing

Two programs are offered by the Belize School of Nursing: a three-year professional program and a one-year advanced program in midwifery.

The three-year professional nursing program is offered in collaboration with BELCAST, which assumes responsiblity for all Science courses included in this program.

The secondary school diploma is required for the three-year course.

Trained nurses are admitted to the midwifery course.

Belize School of Nursing also provides residential accommodations for its students.

Belize Technical College (BTC)

The Belize Technical College offers junior (craft level) and senior (technician) courses of one or two years' duration in four departments: Building Trades, Business Studies, Engineering, and General Studies.

At least three years of secondary education (junior secondary level) and the College Entrance Examination are required for admission to the BTC's programs.

The entrance examinations developed by the College are called Special Papers.

Each course of study develops its own examinations, which are more specific than the SAT. Although a 50 percent is considered a passing grade on the entrance examination, acceptance is also determined by the number of students seeking admission and the number of places available. Because admission is competitive and spaces are limited, a 50 percent on the entrance examination does not guarantee admission.

In June 1981, 55 students enrolled in the "A" level program, 28 in the secretarial and business course, 23 in the engineering technician course, and 26 in the building technician course.

The BTC's programs prepare pupils for several external examinations.

Both the BTC Engineering Department and the Building programs include the subjects required for students to present the OTD (overseas examination) which evaluates the performance of students world wide and awards international accreditation.

A minimum of 72 credit hours is required for this examination.

Courses included as areas of concentration for the Engineering examination are Mathematics, Mechanical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Power Production, Electronics, and Mechanical Drawing.

Courses included in the building programs for this examination are Structures, Properties of Materials, Quantity Surveying, Land Surveying, Mathematics, Building Construction and Mechanical Drawing.

Engineering and Building students must also take Physics and Chemistry courses for these examinations. Students must also complete liberal studies requirements.

The Associate Degree programs at the BTC require 72 credit hours of study.

All courses include a comprehensive final examination. Students are not required to take this exam, although 95 percent do. The examination is required for admission to the UWI, and many employers request final examination scores.

The Belize Technical College requires a minimum grade point average of 2.0 for its higher education programs. Students who do not achieve this are placed on probation for one semester. During this time they must raise their grade point average, if they do not, they are dropped from the program.

Students may add and drop courses during the first week of the semester. Students may also withdraw from a course until the week before courses end. This is listed on the transcript as a withdraw/passing or withdraw/failing, but is not included in the calculation of the grade point average.

The BTC post-secondary programs use an academic calendar based on the semester system. Each semester is 16 weeks. The academic year generally extends from the last week in August to December and from January to May.

St John's College

St. John's College is the only private post-secondary institution in Belize. It occupies an extensive campus in Belize City.

St. John's College Sixth Form is a fully recognized member of the Association of Junior Colleges in the U S. St. John's offers three two-year programs leading to an Associate Degree, which is accepted by most American colleges and universities.

Students must have a secondary school diploma and satisfactory scores on either the ACT or the SAT to gain admission to St. John's Associate Degree programs.

Fees at St. John's are high, between BZ $250 and BZ $300 per semester.

A number of scholarships are available.

In the 1982/83 school year, 190 students were enrolled in St. John's programs, 104 in the academic program, 51 in Business Studies and 33 in the Secretarial course.

The SAT or ACT is required for entrance to any of St. John's post-secondary programs. The student's performance in secondary school is also considered.

St. John's College post-secondary division offers Associate's Degree programs in Arts (History, Literature, Sociology, Political Science etc.), Arts and Sciences, or Sciences (Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, Biology, etc.).

Associate Degree programs are also available in Business Administration, Accounting, Management, Marketing and Secretarial Sciences.

Students must meet liberal arts requirements by taking courses in English, Mathematics and History in addition to the courses required for their major field of study.

A General Paper in English is required for students studying for the "A" level examinations. Most students studying for the "A" level exams take three courses per year.

The grading system followed in the post-secondary courses at St. John's College is generally the same as that used in most US institutions of higher education. A grade of A is equivalent to four grade points and is considered Excellent, a grade of B+ is equivalent to 3.5 grade points and is considered Very Good, a B awards 3 grade points and is considered Good, a C+ awards 2.5 grade points and is considered Satisfactory, a C is equivalent to 2 grade points and is also considered Satisfactory, a D is equivalent to 1 grade point and is considered a Pass. An F is a failing grade and does not award any grade points.

Students who fail a course receive only one opportunity to repeat that course. A grade listed on a transcript as "I" is an Incomplete. Students may withdraw from a course. This is listed on the transcript as WP (withdraw/passing) or WF (withdraw/failing).

Students must have a grade point average of 2.0 and a minimum grade of 2.0 in each course in their major field of study.

Students who do not earn a minimum grade point average of "C" in their first semester are placed on academic probation. If the student does not improve his grade point average by the end of the first year, he may be asked to discontinue his studies at St. John's.

Full-time students who receive a grade point average of 3 or higher for at least 14 semester hours of work receive honors and are placed on the Dean's List.

The academic calendar at St. John's post-secondary is based on the semester system. Each semester includes 15 weeks of class and one week of examinations.

The school year generally runs from late August to mid-December and from January to May. St. John's College observes two weeks holiday at Easter, the day before Lent, and the Belizean national holidays which are: September 10, September 21, November 19, November 26, President's Day, March 9, May 1 and Election Day.

Belize Teachers' College

Belize Teachers' College was designed to meet the requirements of the primary teachers' training course and also offers the BELCAST Teacher Education program for secondary level teacher training.

The primary school teacher training program includes two years of full-time study and a one year internship to earn the Trained Teachers Diploma.

Those teachers performing above a stipulated level in prescribed subjects are awarded an endorsement by the School of Education of the University of the West Indies.

Current enrollment is at 180 students.

Other Programs Awarding Academic Credit

Continuing education programs are available in Belize, and are generally intended for persons not enrolled in formal institutions who need instruction of a remedial nature or who feel the need to acquire specific knowledge or skills for occupational or other reasons.

Continuing education programs are operated by Government ministries, the Extra-Mural Department of the UWI, high school extension departments and voluntary organizations such as the Christian Social Council and the YWCA which offers Home Economics, Arts and Crafts and remedial primary level classes.

One of the older established agencies for non-formal education is the Extra-Mural Department of the UWI. Its programs aid those persons wishing to improve their formal academic and professional qualifications, such as students preparing for "O" Level examinations and teachers improving their professional qualifications.

In 1980-81 the extra-mural programs experimented in the areas of concentrated language training and conducted programs in cooperation with the Belize Institute of Management on topics of "Job Relations" and "Management and the Human Factor" for 70 students from the private sector.

St. John's College provides courses leading to the High School Equivalency Diploma or to certified qualifications in commercial subjects.

Some adult courses are not certificate-oriented, such as the courses in Belizian history and social concerns offered by the St. John's College Extension department.

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS: Although there is no general shortage of primary school teachers, there is a serious shortage of qualified personnel.

There are currently 1,558 primary school teachers, of which 503 are fully trained, 420 are partly trained and the rest are unqualified.

The percentage of fully trained teachers in the system has been between 33 and 38 percent from 1975 to the present. Not only is the percentage of trained teachers low, but many leave the system for other employment. In addition, the distribution of qualified teachers is not equitable. A 1979 survey found that 70 percent of the fully trained teachers, as well as 53 percent of the partially trained teachers (First Class Certificate) were teaching in urban schools, whereas approximately 47 percent of the total primary enrollment is in the rural areas.

The main teacher training course for primary teachers is the three-year program of the Teacher Training Department of BELCAST (the Belize Teachers' College).

Some teachers qualify for this with their "O" Level certificates, but others must gain Second and First Class certificates with the help of courses run by the BNTU and the Extra-Mural Department of the University of the West Indies.

Many teachers for primary schools are initially recruited by primary school managers as uncertified teachers. Many of these are high school graduates. The work of these uncertified teachers is subject to inspection by the Ministry of Education, which conducts special examinations for the award of First and Second Class Teaching Certificates.

First Class Certificate holders are eligible for admission to the full-time, two-year teacher training course in the Belize Teachers' College, which is followed by one year of internship at a primary school.

Students who have three "O" Level GCE passes may also be admitted. Those who successfully complete the course and the internship are awarded the Trained Teachers' Diploma. Average enrollment (including all three years) is about 250.

In 1982 there were 420 full-time and 20 part-time teachers for 6,308 pupils enrolled in secondary schools, giving a pupil/teacher ratio of about 15:1.

Of all teachers at this level, 147 were university graduates, about half of whom had training in teaching. Only 35 percent of the teachers, who had not earned their university degrees, had training in teaching.

The diversity in teachers' qualifications and in the types of schools seems to have led to a concentration of "better" teachers in the "better" schools.

Secondary schools often rely on non-nationals, most of whom are provided by volunteer programs (US Peace Corps, Canadian University Service Overseas, and British Volunteer Service Overseas - UK). Non-nationals constitute approximately 15 percent of all secondary school teachers and some 35 percent of the graduate teachers, and are frequently employed to teach Mathematics and Science.

STUDENT LOANS: Until recently, the Development Finance Corporation awarded student loans for study abroad. This program is no longer in effect.

The Government of Belize offers a few scholarships for study abroad in priority areas for national development.

The government establishes priority areas on an ad hoc basis annually. Students obtaining these scholarships must agree to work in Belize for two years for each year of the scholarship.

The Government of Belize also awards two open scholarships for study at the junior college level in-country, as well as scholarships for secondary level programs for students scoring in the 90th percentile based on a means test.

MAIN IN-COUNTRY SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON U. S. EDUCATION:

American Embassy
Belize City, Belize

St. John's College
Belize City, Belize
Attn: Student Advisor

GLOSSARY OF TERMS:

"A" Level Examination	GCE or CXC examinations presented on completion of certain sixth form programs. A pass awards the student the "Advanced" level. "Advanced" level programs are generally considered equivalent to the Associate's Degree, and enable students to transfer to a US university as a junior.

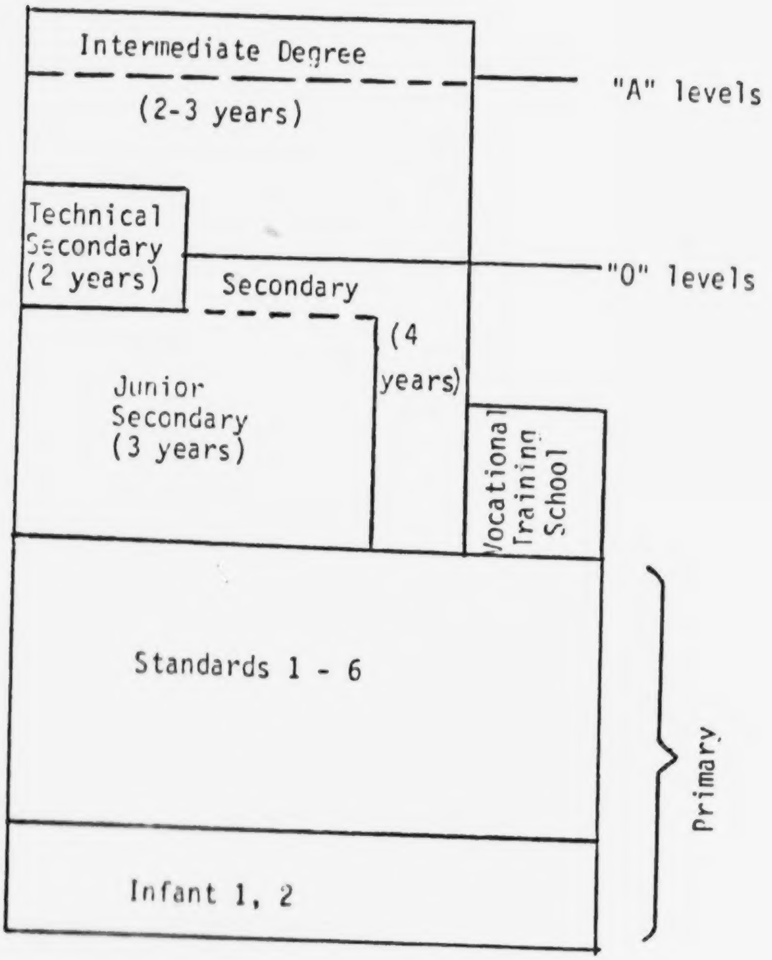
Belize National Selection Examination (BNE)	examination for students completing the primary cycle which awards the primary school diploma and provides the basis for admission to government run secondary schools and government scholarships. This examination tests students ability in English, Mathematics, Science, Social Science and Learning Potential.
Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC)	examining board offering examinations similar to the British GCE, but oriented to Caribbean students.
First Class Teacher's Certificate	awarded for uncertified teachers passing the Ministry of Education examination, enabling entrance to the Teacher Training Program at the Belize Teachers' College.
First - Fourth Forms	four grades of secondary school.
General Certificate of Education (GCE)	British examination system presented on completion of secondary and post-secondary programs. The examinations are subject oriented, and are similar to Achievement tests in the US.
General Paper	English examination required for the "Advanced" level certification.

I	Incomplete. This is recorded on the student's transcript if a failing grade is received for the first semester of a two-semester course.
Infants I and II	first two grades of the primary cycle.
Junior Secondary School	three-year program similar to the first two years of high school in the US.
"O" Level Examination	GCE or CXC examinations presented on completion of the secondary cycle. A pass awards the student the "Ordinary" level. Generally, "O" level passes in prescribed subjects are required for entrance to a post-secondary program in Belize.
Primary School Leaving Certificate	certificate awarded on completion of the primary cycle and obtaining a passing grade on the Belize National Examination.
Second Class Teaching Certificate	awarded to uncertified teachers passing the Ministry of Education Second Class examination. Teachers who pass this examination may present the First Class Teaching Examination.
Senior Secondary School	similar to the last two years of high school in the US. Students enter the Senior Secondary program on completion of the Junior Secondary program.

Special Papers	entrance examinations for admission to the Belize Technical College post-secondary programs. Each course of study develops its own examination.
Standards I - IV	grades three through eight of the primary cycle.
Trained Teachers Diploma	certificate awarded on completion of the three-year teacher training program at the Belize Teacher's College.
WF	withdrew/failing.
WP	withdrew/passing.

EDUCATION LADDER

BELIZE


Intermediate Degree
(2-3 years)
"A" levels
Technical Secondary (2 years)
Secondary
"O" levels
(4 years)
Junior Secondary (3 years)
Vocational Training School
Standards 1 - 6
Infant 1, 2
Primary

COUNTRY EDUCATION PROFILE
COSTA RICA
1986

STUDENT PLACEMENT IN THE US UNIVERSITY SYSTEM: Educational standards in Costa Rica are very high. The educational system is well-developed and is considered better than others in the region.

Costa Rican schools offer less opportunity for students to doctor their grades, and as a result grades at the upper end of the spectrum can be taken at face value. In general, Costa Rican students really receive the grades they deserve.

The *Licenciatura* degree is often not accepted as a full Masters degree for students interested in pursuing a PhD program in the US.

Acceptance of the *Licenciatura* degree requirements as transfer credits for a Masters or doctoral program should be considered on a case-by-case basis. For example, a student who has a *Licenciatura* plus three years of experience in his field may be accelerated into a doctoral program.

Admissions officers should consider the Costa Rican program to determine how it balances with a US program.

In some cases, the student may be required to take additional courses to reach the Master's degree equivalency.

The *Diplomado* degree is an intermediate degree offered in technical areas. Usually these studies run from two to three years in duration.

Diplomado program requirements are not the same as those for the Associate Degree, although this is the closest equivalent.

Students completing a *diplomado* program can continue to a *Bachillerato* program in Costa Rican universities. In some cases, additional coursework is required before the student enters the third year of studies.

In 1985, there were approximately 10,000 students enrolled in *diplomado* programs in the eight institutions of higher education.

In general, Costa Rican students have very little opportunity to practice their English. The quality of English language training in the public schools, particularly in the training level of the teachers and the materials used, is poor. Some private schools, such as the parochial schools, do not offer English language training, consequently admissions officers should consider the English language ability of Costa Rican students.

Most private schools students receive sufficient English language training to enter the US university system.

Admissions officers should also be aware that the stronger schools are located near San José, and should therefore consider the student's home town. Admission standards should be more demanding for students from cities other than San José.

Admissions officers should consider a student's grades, letters of recommendation and the TOEFL or ALIGU, as well as the student's program, a course description, test scores, and whether the student has maintained a consistent grade point average.

Students with a minimum grade point average of 7 can be considered strong students.

Admissions officers should also be aware that the stronger schools are located near San José, and should therefore consider the student's home town. Admission standards should be more demanding for students from cities other than San José.

Admissions officers should also consider the number of years a student has taken to obtain a university degree. Generally four to six years to obtain an undergraduate degree can be considered a reasonable amount of time because most students study on a part-time basis and work full-time.

Costa Rican students generally do not experience great difficulties in adjusting to US university life other than the difficulties experienced by many Latin American students. Costa Ricans are more knowledgeable about American customs than many other students from the region. As most students in Costa Rica live at home while attending school, the adjustment to dormitory life in a U. S. university may be difficult.

EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM BACKGROUND: Costa Rica enjoys a strong tradition of education and a great value is placed on education as a means of improving the quality of life. Education is considered an important issue.

This is due to the fact that Costa Rica at the middle of this century incorporated in its constitution, a substantial number of reforms to its educational system.

The Costarrican government designates one-third of the national budget for education. This percentage is high in comparison to other countries in the region. This helps to explain why teachers in Costa Rica are better trained than those in other Central American countries.

Educational materials are produced in-country and are of good quality. The Ministry of Education and university-trained officials are responsible for this and have received assistance from Spain in developing texts.

Education is mandatory by law up to the ninth grade and free education extends through the twelfth grade. Costa Rica has a high per capita income and although it is basically an agrarian society, almost all children attend school.

Vocational school students receive training and technical secondary programs in the tenth and eleventh grades.

Most youth complete up to grade six.

Primary education is emphasized far more than secondary, and the attrition rate between the primary and secondary levels is rather high.

The literacy rate is 80 percent.

Every new Minister of Education brings changes to the educational system.

In 1982 reforms were initiated in the public school curriculum to upgrade mathematics programs and to add more hours of English language training.

Private school math programs include the material required by the Ministry of Education, as well as advanced material. As a result, the programs in the private schools tend to be very rigorous, for example students study Calculus as part of the Math II curriculum.

A shaky economy and an inflationary situation have forced the government to cut back on education expenditures. Many feel the quality of education will be weakened due to the growing demand and shortage of funding.

The economic situation will have an affect on the number of students and faculty continuing their undergraduate and/or graduate study abroad. However, it is difficult at this point, to determine whether the numbers will increase or decrease.

Inflation may rule out the possibility of study in the US for some students but many believe that the financial crunch will weaken the Costa Rican degrees and this will force more students to study in the US.

This situation will most likely force universities to increase tuition to meet rising costs.

University officials are concerned about a decrease in the rural student population where the University of Costa Rica's four regional centers are located.

There are strong possibilities that the student population may decrease and, as a result, some programs may need to be interrupted or discontinued.

Tuition costs are currently 200 colones per credit hour. Increased tuition costs will result in a greater number of students requiring scholarships from the universities and/or students taking less courses per semester because they will have to work and study part-time.

The academic year is about 140 to 150 days in duration due to a large number of national holidays. In general, classes begin in March and end in mid-November.

PRIMARY EDUCATION: Primary education is six years and is divided into two cycles. The First Cycle includes grades one through three, and the Second is grades four through six.

Upon completion of the second cycle, students receive a certificate called Conclusión del I y II Ciclo. The grading system at this level is based on a scale of 0-100 with 60 as the minimum passing grade.

Public schools are less rigorous and students are promoted to the next grade with a minimum passing grade.

The majority of the private schools, mainly those located in the capital city and its suburbs, require students to pass with grades above the minimum level. Students with minimum grades are required to attend summer schools in those subjects of low proficiency.

Teachers and/or social workers (Visitadores Sociales) visit the homes of students who do not attend school. The government offers programs of financial assistance for families with low incomes. However, the governments' lack of resources makes it difficult to meet educational objectives. To help poor families rural schools stagger their hours and include relevant subjects in their curricula (information on crops) so children can help their families and still remain in school.

SECONDARY EDUCATION: Secondary education lasts between five and six years and is divided into two cycles. The Third Cycle includes grades seven through nine, and the tenth and eleventh grades from the Diversified Cycle (Ciclo Diversificado).

Vocational school students receive training and technical secondary programs in the tenth and eleventh grades.

Students in the tenth grade of vocational school are required to decide on their area of specialization.

The diversified cycle is divided into three main tracks: academic, artistic and technical.

The technical track is further divided into Industrial, Commercial and Agricultural concentrations. All three of the technical options require three years of study.

The Escuela Vocacional offers secondary and vocational programs. Students in this school complete their secondary level studies in three years and are awarded two diplomas, the Grado Técnico and Certificado de Conclusión Escuela Secundaria.

The academic and artistic tracks are two years in duration and students complete secondary school at the end of the eleventh year. The academic program includes basic courses such as Spanish, History and Literature and electives such as Foreign Language, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Math 1 or 2, Art, and Music.

Public and private schools follow the Ministry of Education accredited program.

Private schools usually offer certain advantages. Among these are: more intensive programs, a higher level of English training, better libraries and equipment and often the teachers are better qualified.

Students graduating from private schools have less difficulty in adjusting to the American university system. They have gone through intensive academic programs requiring more rigorous study.

The private schools offering particularly strong programs are:

- British School
- Costa Rican Academy
- Country Day School
- Humboldt School
- Jaim Weizen Academy
- La Salle School
- Lincoln School (awards both the Costa Rican and American high school diplomas)
- Marion Baker School
- Methodist School
- Pan American School
- St. Francis School

There are some public schools in the capital and other large cities of the provinces which have strong programs, as well. These include the Luis Gonzaga School in Cartago, the Liceo de Costa Rica (an all boys school) and the Colegio Señoritas (an all girls school) in San José.

Upon completion of secondary school, students receive the Certificado de Conclusión de la Enseñanza Diversificada which is equivalent to the U S high school diploma.

The grading system used by Costa Rican secondary schools is as follows: 9 to 10 is excellent; 8 to 8.99 is very good; 7 to 7.99 is sufficient and 0 to 6.99 is failing.

A high percentage of the students graduating from high school continue to university studies.

HIGHER EDUCATION: Higher education is regulated by the Council of Rectors, established in 1980. The Council's primary function is to review programs and establish guidelines to avoid duplication of programs.

Costa Rica's three public universities are the University of Costa Rica (UCR), the National University of Heredia (UNA) and the Universidad Estatal a Distancia (UNED).

The Technological Institute of Costa Rica is a public institution and very recently began offering a master's degree in Computers.

At the UNED, students have the opportunity to complete coursework through correspondence and television if they cannot attend regular classes. The purpose of this university is to provide an education to students who because of job responsibilities, remote locations, family obligations and other circumstances, have been unable to attend conventional universities.

The Autonomous University of Central America (UACA), INCAE and the National University of San Diego are private institutions of higher education in Costa Rica that offer degrees.

Spanish is the language of instruction in all in-country universities.

The *Certificado de Conclusión de la Enseñanza Diversificada* is required for entrance to all of the undergraduate programs.

The procedure for entering university programs after completion of vocational programs is not well defined. There are few technical schools in Costa Rica and a small number of these graduates continue on to university level programs.

Tuition is almost uniform at all public Costa Rican universities. Students pay minimal fees and tuition. All the universities offer evening classes as well as daytime sessions since many students work.

Costs at private institutions vary and are higher than those at publc institutions.

The undergraduate degrees offered in Costa Rica are the *Bachillerato* and the *Licenciatura*. It should be noted the *Bachillerato* and *Bachiller* are used interchangeably. In most Latin American countries a *Bachillerato* is a secondary school degree. In Costa Rica it is also a university level degree, which requires no thesis.

The *Licenciatura* falls between the *Bachillerato* and the Master's degree. The *Licenciatura* requires a thesis (in which a team approach may be utilized) and requires approximately two semesters of study beyond the *Bachillerato*.

Students obtain the *Licenciatura* by completing the *Bachillerato*, required coursework, participating in social service within the university, writing their thesis and by passing a graduation exam.

Generally students must obtain their *Bachillerato* before continuing to a *Licenciatura*. At the UCR students can begin coursework toward the *Licenciatura* before the *Bachillerato* requirements are completed with special permission.

The first doctoral program in Costa Rica was instituted in the area of Philosophy in 1973. It was discontinued two years later.

Education Profile: Costa Rica

In 1975 the University of Costa Rica established a graduate school in the country. To date, it is the university that has the greatest number of graduate programs. These programs include the following:

- Adult Education
- Agronomy
- Biochemistry
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Clinical Chemistry
- Electronics
- Handicapped Rehabilitation
- History
- Industrial Chemistry
- Mathematics
- Microbiology
- Natural Resources
- Pharmacology
- Philosophy
- Physiology
- Psychology
- Public Administration
- Sociology
- Special Education

The Autonomous University of Central America (UACA) offers a reduced number of graduate programs.

While many of the undergraduate programs available are strong, most universities in Costa Rica do not offer graduate programs.

The only doctoral progam is in Law.

Master's degree programs are available in Biology, History, Natural Sciences, Education and other areas at the UCR or at the UACA.

The INCAE and the National University of San Diego recently opened in Costa Rica offering the Master's in Business Administration.

The University of Puerto Rico opened a branch campus recently in San José and offers business education courses in typing, accounting and shorthand.

The requirements for a Master's degree differe depending on the university.

At the University of Costa Rica a thesis is required while private institutions are more flexible.

Generally, students complete an entire program of study but in some cases, a placement test may be taken in order to be exempted from some of the program requirements.

More *Licenciatura* students tend to continue to masters degree programs than *Bachillerato* students.

The academic calendar followed by all public institutions begins in the month of March and ends in November.

The private universities follow another academic calendar. They begin first term classes in January and end the year in December.

Generally, the grading scale used by public Costa Rican universities is based on a scale of 0 - 10 with 7 as the minimum passing grade. The private universities differ in requiring an 8 as the minimum passing grade. Additionally, different colleges within a university may use different scales or minimum passing grades.

Ninety-five percent of all students entering university complete their studies and earn their degrees.

University of Costa Rica (UCR)

The University of Costa Rica was established in 1940 and is the oldest and most prestigious university in the country.

The UCR is a public co-educational institution.

The main campus is located in San Pedro de Montes de Oca, just outside of San José and has a student population of 32,000.

Five regional centers are located in rural areas of the country. Total enrollment at the regional centers is 3,501.

UCR offers undergraduate and graduate programs leading to the *Licenciatura* and Master's degrees.

Most of the graduate degree programs have been in existence since 1979.

Admission to the UCR is granted to those who have successfully completed a secondary school program authorized by the Ministry of Education and have passed an admission examination. The admission examination is similar to the GRE but is not evaluated according to the students interests in pursuing a particular field of study. The applicant's score is combined with the average of the last two years of high school courses to provide a final admission score. The passing grade of the examination changes according to the demand and the current student population, but is usually between 6 and 6.5 in San Jose while the regional branches generally accept a score of 5.5 or higher because they usually do not fill their enrollment requirements.

Students enter a general studies program (*Estudios Generales*), which must be completed in the first two semesters of study. These courses must be completed before the student can begin any of the UCR's degree programs.

The *Ciencias Generales* provides a liberal arts orientation and involves 12 credit hours of History, Spanish and Philosophy which are complemented by one sports and one cultural activity. A sampling of general courses designed to familiarize students with fields of study not directly related to their majors is also required to provide a broad educational background.

In 1981, 1,068 students presented the admission examination though 479 were unable to complete the *Estudios Generales*. Ninety percent of the students entering a *Licenciatura* program after completing *Estudios Generales* successfully complete their degree requirements. Approximately 80 percent of the students entering masters degree programs complete all of the requirements and earn their degree. The majority of the students enrolling in these programs are university faculty members, government officials and students from other Latin American countries.

The required number of credits and duration of study for the degree programs varies from one field of study to another. As a general rule, a *Bachillerato* requires eight semesters of study and a *Licenciatura* requires ten semesters. Programs for each field of study are standardized. The majority of the courses taken toward each degree are required and each major allows for only a few electives.

All students must take core courses in departments other than that of their major field of study. This practice introduces students to different disciplines.

Students must complete the requirements for their major, social service within the university (trabajo comunal universitario), a thesis for the *Licenciatura*, and/or pass a graduation examination to earn their degree.

In recent years a reading knowledge of a foreign language (English, French, Italian or German) has been included as a requirement for most majors.

A thesis required for all master's degrees.

The grading scale used by the UCR follows the traditional scale of 0 to 10.

10	A	8.0	B-
9.5	A	7.5	C
9.0	A-	7.0	D
8.5	B	Below 7	F

The minimum passing grade required for all graduate courses is 8.0.

Courses at the UCR are offered by the semester and school year.

The academic year begins in early March and ends in December.

First semester final examinations are given in July. The exam period is followed by a two-week break and a one-week enrollment period for the second semester.

Final examinations for second semester courses and annual courses are given in December.

Summer courses are offered in January and February.

Since regional centers are smaller with fewer students they respond to regional needs and do not offer all of the fields of study available at the main campus in San José.

In some fields of study where courses are offered in both a regional center and the main campus, students may begin studies at the regional center and continue at the main campus after the first year. The regional centers also require *Estudios Generales*.

National University of Heredia (UNA)

The UNA was founded in 1973. It replaced the previous Teacher Training Institution which had been established and supervised by the Ministry of Education. In its first year, it had over 4,000 matriculated students, most of which attended part-time. Most of these attended the five normal schools that were absorbed into the University.

Since prospective teachers are now required to obtain a *Bachillerato*, this curriculum currently forms part of that of the School of Education.

Undergraduate degrees offered are the *Bachillerato Universitario* and the *Licenciatura*. New initiatives currently in the planning stage are for the creation of regional schools concerned with regional problems.

The National University's extension programs are not well-developed yet and the degree qualifications are not considered to be the same as those in the universities located in San José.

Autonomous University of Central America (UACA)

The UACA is a private coeducational institution founded in 1975.

It is probably the only university in Latin America based on the British system.

The UACA is made up of 11 affiliated "colleges of higher education," located in San José and other provincial main cities, each with its own faculty and course requirements.

The colleges are:

- Colegio Artes Plásticas
- Colegio de Ciencias Médicas
- Colegio de Monterrey
- Colegio Leonardo Da Vinci
- Colegio Santo Tomás de Aquino
- Colegio Veritas
- Collegium Academic
- Collegium Latinuum
- Collegium Libertas
- Escuela Libre de Derecho

In most Latin American countries *colegio* is used for high school, however, at the UACA it means university level.

No admission examination is required. Admission is based on high school or university grades, an interview with the admissions committee in the appropriate college, and in the case of medicine, an aptitude test.

Once a student has completed all the academic requirements for a degree, the College must present the student to the University for the degree examinations. The examining committee is composed of two professors from the University, two other professors and one professor nominated by the Ministry of Education. Examination committees have a two year term.

A student must pass the University degree examinations with a minimum of 80 percent.

Students passing with 70 percent or more but less than 80 percent will receive a Diploma de Pasante with a mention of Probatus. This is not considered to be a degree. Students passing with 80 percent receive a mention of Bene Probatus, from 86 to 94 percent receive Cum Laude, 95 to 100 percent receive Summa Cum Laude.

The UACA offers undergraduate and graduate programs which allow more flexibility in coursework.

Courses at the UACA are more practically oriented to the needs of the students than those available at other Costa Rican universities.

Degrees offered are the Bachillerato Universitario, the Licenciatura, and the Maestría.

Courses such as English for Computer Use are offered.

Most students attend classes year round and complete their Bachillerato in three years.

Many of the UACA's instructors teach part-time.

Each college is limited to a maximum of 1,000 students with classes limited to a maximum of 30 students. Each college must offer at least five major degree fields.

As new colleges are established, they are allowed to add one field per year until the five are complete. Students are limited to a maximum of four courses per trimester (12 academic units).

Students at the UACA attend classes full-time.

The academic year runs from January to December and is divided into 3 trimesters of 15 weeks each. The only exception is the medical school which works two semesters: one 22 weeks in length and the other 23 weeks.

Medical students are eligible to receive a Licenciatura at the end of their studies, but it is not awarded until they have completed their one year internship. At that time they receive both the Licenciatura and a Doctor of Medicine degree.

It is expected that full-time students will complete a Bachillerato degree in three years, and a Licenciatura or a Maestría in five years.

Although University regulations provide for Doctorado degrees, none are being offered and are not expected in the near future.

The Licenciatura and Maestría are considered equivalent degrees at the UACA. The former emphasizes professional training while the latter emphasizes research and investigation.

All candidates must present a thesis and defend it in a university examining committee.

Three formats are used in teaching: tutorials, seminars, and regular classes.

The Studium is the only college at present teaching by tutorial. Students in this college must take a one-year preparatory course prior to commencing their university studies. The preparatory course consists of History, Mathematics, Spanish and Philosophy.

Academic units or credits are measured in Hours of Study (Horas de Estudio) and are so shown on transcripts. Sixty hours of study are equal to one academic unit. The grading system is based as follows:

100	Excellent
90	Very Good
80	Good
70	Passing
Below 70	Failure

Failures are not reported on transcripts.

The following are the minimum academic unit requirements for degrees: Bachillerato: 72 units, Licenciatura: 120 units, Maestría: 120 units, Doctorado: 144 units.

Universidad Estatal a Distancia (UNED)

This university was establshed by the Legislative Assembly in February of 1977 to train professionals in priority areas by non-traditional methods. This is accomplished through the utilization of new communications and technology at 28 regional academic centers.

At these regional centers students meet with tutors, complete all administrative matters, and utilize the facilities available.

In 1985-'86 there were 10,223 students enrolled in the centers.

Coursework is presented through instructional packets, which contain the didactic information, study guides, audiovisual aids and a schedule of tutoring sessions in person and on the telephone.

The major objective is to provide a university education to individuals who comply with admission standards but have not had access to higher education.

UNED's major thrust has been to provide services to those individuals who because of work, living distances, family obligations or other circumstances have been unable to attend conventional universities.

The current courses of study they provide are Education, Business Administration, Public Administration, Farm and Cooperative Administration, Social Service and Health Services. The academic levels range from Técnico, and Diplomado to Bachillerato and Licenciatura.

In 1986, UNED will begin providing coursework toward master's degrees in Education and Public Service.

Technological Institute of Costa Rica

The Technological Institute was founded in 1971 and classes were initiated in 1973. The Technological Institute is a public institution located in Cartago.

The degrees offered are the Diplomado and the Bachillerato Universitario. They are considered technical and professional level programs.

To gain admission students must have a secondary school certificate recognized by the Ministry of Education and pass an entrance examination. Students receive only one opportunity to present the entrance exam on the date established by the Institute. The Technological Institute's entrance examination is more business and engineering oriented than the one used by the UCR and the UNA.

The Institute maintains high academic standards. The engineering programs include 60 percent theoretical and 40 percent practical work, while the electronics programs are the opposite.

Over 80 percent of the students are enrolled full-time in the day program.

Most programs are six semesters plus a seventh for industrial practice.

A full-time student carries 21 units a semester.

Each semester, students must take 50 percent of required courses for full-time students and pass all of these to obtain their degree.

Students in all areas, except Fisheries Administration, Agronomy, and Occupational Security and Hygiene, must take four credits in General Mathematics. These credits do not count toward the degree but do count toward the total number of credits taken per semester.

All students must pass English I or an equivalency examination.

The Diplomado degree requires a minimum of 60 and a maximum of 90 credits for completion, and a Bachillerato Universitario a minimum of 120 and a maximum of 144 credits.

Each degree program has a specific number of credit requirements.

Students can transfer to the Technological Institute from other university level programs by submitting their transcripts and course descriptions. Students interested in transferring to the Technological Institute must contact the school or department which they are interested in entering. The school or department must determine the acceptance of transfer credits for their appropriate programs.

The school year begins the third week of January and ends the second week of December. Each semester is eighteen weeks in duration.

National University of San Diego

The National University of San Diego is a private institution affiliated with the National University in the US and located in San José.

This university offers a Master's in Business Administration.

Many of the professors at the National University are American and the university brings many lecturers from the US.

In-house programs are available for research.

The curriculum organization is similar to that of a US university but does not include a liberal arts orientation.

Instituto Centroamericano de Administración de Empresas (INCAE)

INCAE is a private institution offering a Master's in Business Administration. The campus is located in San José.

Instituto Tecnológico de Administración y Negocios (ITAN)

The ITAN is one of the main technical and business schools in Costa Rica. It is located in San José.

Current enrollment is around 100.

The ITAN offers both the Diplomado and Bachillerato degrees.

The Bachillerato is available in Business Administration and students can continue to the MBA program at the National University or the Universidad Autónoma de Costa Rica.

The Bachillerato program is a three year program. Students may take classes in either day or evening sessions. No basic studies are required, but the program is rigorous and rigid.

The ITAN Bachillerato program is considered by some comparable to the undergraduate program offered by the UCR School of Business. Nevertheless, the Bachillerato degree has never been recognized nor accepted by the UCR.

FACULTY TRAINING PROGRAM: Since 1962, the UCR has maintained a Faculty Training Program that consists of sending qualified faculty members to do graduate studies abroad. As a result of this, the UCR is considered the most prestigious and serious university in Costa Rica and the region.

The other two public insitutions have followed the UCR and now have a similar program according to their specific needs and resources.

STUDENT LOANS: Financial aid is available for study in Costa Rica and abroad. Scholarships and loans for study abroad are very difficult to obtain.

Universities also offer scholarship programs for study in-country and in some cases for study abroad.

CONAPE is a financial credit organization and provides assistance fundamentally for undergraduate and post-graduate programs in the country and abroad. Preference is given to students pursuing studies in areas corresponding to national development goals. These include Basic Sciences, Agriculture, Computer Science and Ecology.

Loans for study abroad are also available to students interested in pursuing a program which is not available in Costa Rica, such as Business Administration with a special emphasis, Engineering and some Health specializations such as Cardiology.

Funding is not available for study in the areas of Philosophy, Literature, Art, or for undergraduate studies abroad.

Total financing is not available and CONAPE funds are intended to be used as a complement to the financial package.

Loans are usually given to professors or individuals who are employed.

Loans are for costs not covered by scholarships.

CONAPE has been providing loans in Costa Rica for seven years. Approximately 5,000 students have received loans.

Since 1977 about 100 to 150 students have studied in the US with loans from CONAPE.

Most students choose to study in-country because of the high cost of study abroad in the US, Europe, and South America.

In addition, most students who receive financial assistance from CONAPE study at the undergraduate level.

CONAPE also provides financial assistance for one semester of English training in the US if the student has good qualifications and wants to study in an area corresponding to national development goals.

In order to receive financial assistance from CONAPE, students must have been awarded a scholarship and must provide documentation of the costs the scholarship covers.

CONAPE conducts an analysis of the cost and pays the difference if the atudent needs additional funds.

If the scholarship is found to be sufficient, CONAPE will not award a loan.

MAIN IN-COUNTRY SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON US EDUCATION:

American Embassy
USIS
APO Miami Fl 34020

Centro Cultural Costarricense
Norteamericano
AP Postal 1489
San José, Costa Rica
Attn: Student Counselor

University of Costa Rica
Oficina de Asuntos
Internacionales
Cd. Univ. Rodrigo Facio
San José, Costa Rica
Attn: Rodolfo Mendez

GLOSSARY OF TERMS:

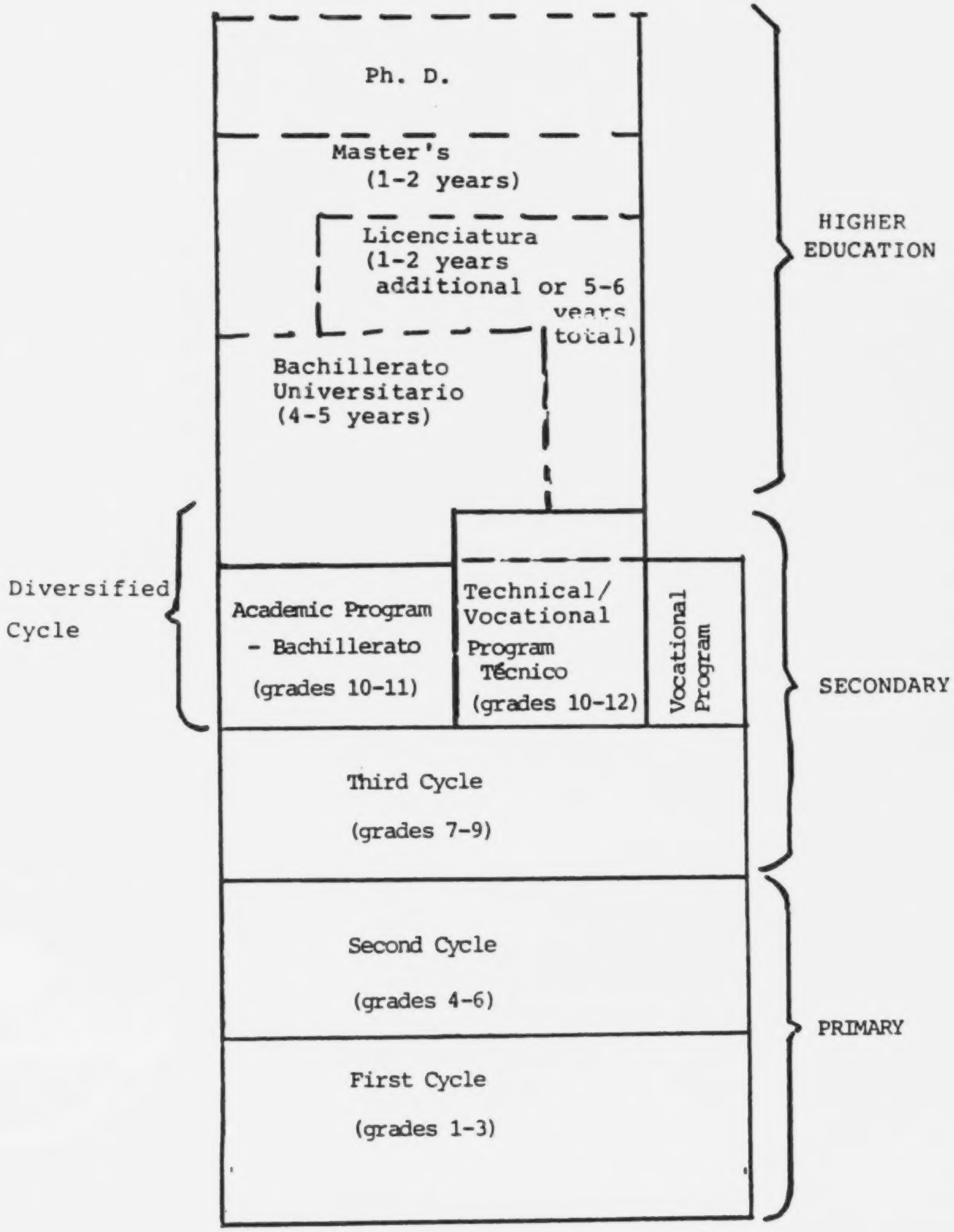
Aprobado	approved, but no credit is given, similar to auditing a course.
Bachillerato Universitario	undergraduate degree usually requiring four years of study. A thesis is not required. This degree is considered equivalent to the Bachelor's Degree in the US and enables students to enter the third or fourth year of a Licenciatura program or enter Master's degree program in Costa Rica.
Certificado de Conclusión de Enseñanza Media	secondary school diploma.
Certificado de Conclusión de Escuela Secundaria	secondary school certificate.

Estudios Generales	general studies program required by the Universidad de Costa Rica. This program includes 12 credit hours of courses in History, Spanish and Philosophy for which students receive academic credit, as well as one sports and one cultural activity for which students do not receive academic credit. Students must complete this program in their first two semesters before they are able to enroll in any of the university's degree programs.
Ciclo Diversificado	upper secondary level cycle including grades ten through twelve. Students in this cycle choose one of three tracks: Academic, Technical or Artistic.
Diploma de Pasante	not considered a degree. Given to students at the Universidad Autonoma de Centroamerica who have passed their university degree examinatiion with a grade of 70 to 80 percent.
Doctorado	doctoral degree.
Enseñanza Media	secondary level education.
Grado Técnico	vocational school diploma.
Horas de Estudio	hours of study.

Licenciatura	undergraduate degree usually requiring five years of study and a thesis project. This degree requires approximately 30 credits more than the Bachillerato, enables students to enter a master's degree program in Costa Rica. The Licenciatura falls between the Bachillerato and master's degrees. The Universidad Autónoma de Centroamerica considers the Licenciatura equivalent to the master's degree.
Maestría	Master's Degree.
Primer Ciclo	first three years of primary school, grades one through three.
Segundo Ciclo	last three years of primary school, grades four through six.
Tercer Ciclo	first three years of secondary school, grades seven through nine.
Trabajo Comunal Universitario	social service within the university.
Visitadores Sociales	social workers.
Vocacional	vocational.

EDUCATION LADDER

COSTA RICA


Ph. D.
Master's (1-2 years)
Licenciatura (1-2 years additional or 5-6 years total)
Bachillerato Universitario (4-5 years)
HIGHER EDUCATION
Diversified Cycle
Academic Program - Bachillerato (grades 10-11)
Technical/ Vocational Program Técnico (grades 10-12)
Vocational Program
SECONDARY
Third Cycle (grades 7-9)
Second Cycle (grades 4-6)
First Cycle (grades 1-3)
PRIMARY

COUNTRY EDUCATION PROFILE
EL SALVADOR
1986

STUDENT PLACEMENT IN THE US UNIVERSITY SYSTEM: Compared to other Central American students, Salvadorans may not fair as well. The educational system has been affected by political unrest in the country.

Salvadoran higher education has not received the importance nor the growth evident in other Central American countries.

The Bachillerato is the equivalent of the US high school diploma and represents 12 years of schooling.

The Técnico and teacher degrees are intermediate university level degrees and are considered similar to the Associate degree in the US.

Students holding the técnico degree may transfer into some Licenciatura programs in El Salvador, depending on their major field of study.

The Licenciatura is an undergraduate degree and is considered equivalent to the Bachelor's degree. This degree normally represents five years of schooling.

Salvadoran schools do not use a curve in awarding grades, and as a result transcripts may list grades that appear low. Grading practices at the university level tend to be rigorous, and grades of 6-7 on the scale of 10 are often considered average grades in El Salvador.

For a realistic evaluation, admissions officers should request the student's class rank number when possible, and SAT, ACT, or GRE scores. Letters of recommendation in Spanish accompanied by an official, certified translation are also helpful.

EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM BACKGROUND: El Salvador is the most overpopulated country in Central America.

Education is free and is mandatory by Salvadoran law through either the ninth grade or the termination of the primary school program.

Some national institutes offer free education through the 12th grade or the primary and secondary cycles.

Fifteen point four percent of the national budget is devoted to education at all levels, with 2.2 percent of the national budget devoted to higher education. According to the Ministry of Education, the literacy rate in El Salvador is 69.8 percent.

Classes resumed at El Salvador's National University campus in August 1984 following closure of the campus in June 1980. The resumption of classes focused university administration attention on the dire need to raise sufficient funds to rehabilitate the campus.

National University Rector Miguel A. Parada estimated that approximately $20 million dollars would be needed to repair damages and replace destroyed or stolen equipment.

The government has not provided any restoration funds.

University officials sought a 1985 budget of $27 million dollars, two-thirds of which was earmarked for salaries and equipment. The remainder would cover about half the cost for the repairs the university requires.

In late 1984, the government indicated that the university is expected to support itself by charging students a tuition of about $35 dollars a month. Before the campus closed in 1980, students paid a token fee to attend. Current tuition is about three dollars a month. University officials say a tuition increase to eight dollars a month may be possible, but the figure proposed by the government would put costs beyond the reach of most National University students.

According to university officials, the return to the campus is a step toward normalization. The return of campus facilities allows administrators to rechannel money previously spent on renting temporary facilities. These funds can now be earmarked for refurbishing projects.

Primary and secondary school curricula have recently been revised and updated to re-orient education to national development goals.

The government is currently decentralizing the administration of the national education system, and the educational television channels are being used to provide in-service teacher training programs and high school programs for those who are not able to attend school.

The current civil war in El Salvador has displaced thousands of families from strategic areas, and has forced the closing of all schools in these districts.

According to the 1984/85 Open Doors, 1,250 Salvadoran students enrolled in US colleges and universities.

PRIMARY EDUCATION: The basic cycle (ciclo básico) or primary education includes nine academic years and is divided into three cycles.

The first cycle (primer ciclo) includes grades one through three, the second cycle (segundo ciclo) includes grades four through six and the third cycle (tercer ciclo) includes grades seven through nine.

Pre-primary education (educación parvularia) is generally offered by private institutions, and the government supports only a few experimental centers in the capital city at this level. Pre-primary education is not obligatory.

In the first and second cycles of primary education, 656,150 students are enrolled in public schools and 45,222 students are enrolled in private schools. In the third cycle, 131,290 students are enrolled in public schools and 19,866 students are enrolled in private schools.

Both public and private schools must follow the Ministry of Education's official program as a curriculum guide.

The grading system used at this level is based on a scale of 0 - 10, with six as the minimum passing grade. A certificate is awarded for each grade passed at the primary level. The certificate awarded for each approved grade is the "Certificado de Aprobación de Grado."

Although education at this level is obligatory, this is not enforced due to the lack of personnel and the current political situation in El Salvador.

SECONDARY EDUCATION: According to the 1979 census, the attrition rate between the primary and secondary levels is 21 percent.

The secondary level (Ciclo Diversificado) includes three years of senior high school, and is offered in 10 different tracks:

- academic
- administration
- agricultural
- arts
- fisheries and navigation
- health studies
- hotel and tourism
- industrial
- technology studies
- vocational

A correspondence program is also offered to students who cannot attend classes.

Senior high school courses are offered through the national educational television station in combination with the Ministry of Education.

Each of these tracks offers students the Bachillerato, or high school diploma.

The Academic track is the track generally followed by students planning to continue a university career.

The Hotel and Tourism track offers vocational courses in the field of tourism and hotel management.

The Industry track offers several vocational courses in areas such as auto mechanics, plastics, and refrigeration.

The Technology track offers a concentration of courses in fields such as Social Work, Health, or Engineering Technology.

The Health track offers courses oriented in health fields.

Students following the Arts track concentrate on applied arts.

The Navigation and Fisheries track offers vocational courses in navigation and in the fishing industry.

Students following the Administration track receive training through vocational courses in the field of business.

The Vocational track includes studies in areas such as home economics and handicrafts.

As of 1983, secondary education enrollment in private and government schools was 82,573. Public school enrollment for this cycle was 43,831 while private school enrollment was 38,742. The majority of the students enrolled at this level (24,420 students in 1983) participated in the academic track.

All of the secondary level programs offer the Bachillerato or Diploma de Educación Media certificate.

Students can enter university in El Salvador from any of these tracks, although students often have a better chance of enrolling in the major field of study that is their first choice if their secondary level Bachillerato is in an area that is compatible with their choice of major.

The standard grading system at this level is based on a scale of 0 - 10 with six as the minimum passing grade.

To help meet its perceived needs in health, business and agriculture the government of El Salvador has expanded its educational program to several strategic provinces.

The quality of public education continues to decrease. Today, the more successful secondary schools are in the private sector.

Some of the better secondary schools are:

- Liceo Salvadoreño (all-boys)
- Externado San José (all-boys)
- Escuela Americana (co-educational, offering a dual Salvadoran -American program and is accredited in the US)
- Colegio García Flamenco (all-boys)
- Institutos Nacionales (all-boys schools located in San Salvador, Santa Ana and San Miguel)
- Academia Británica
- Escuela Alemana

Some of the private religious schools for girls also offer strong programs. These are:

- Colegio Guadalupano
- Colegio Sagrada Familia
- Colegio Sagrado Corazon
- Colegio Maria Auxiliadora
- Colegio Bautista

The Ministry of Education Department of Statistics estimates that 40 percent of the students completing secondary level programs continue to university studies.

HIGHER EDUCATION: The closure of the National University in 1980 met with a responding massive opening of private universities. There are currently 27 private universities in El Salvador.

The Ministry of Education controls these through the Dirección General de Educación Media y Superior (Office of Secondary and Higher Education) and the Dirección General de Educación Universitaria (Office of University Education).

Two types of institutions in El Salvador offer higher education programs. They are the technical and university level institutions.

Those functioning at the technical or vocational level are the Escuela Militar, the Technological Institute, the Nursing School and the National School for Agriculture. All of these institutions are government sponsored.

Technical level programs are usually three years long. The degrees awarded on completion of these studies are Oficial, Técnico and Perito Agrónomo.

These institutions have no equivalent at the university level, and students graduating from one of these programs are eligible to begin university studies in the first year of a Licenciatura program.

The National University and many other private institutions function at the university level and offer Técnico (intermediate), Profesorado, Licenciatura, Maestría and Doctorado degree programs.

The language of instruction in all is Spanish, except in the small American University, which is bilingual and holds classes in Spanish and English.

University entrance is granted to students holding a secondary level certificate (Bachillerato or Diploma de Educación Media). Students must also demonstrate a good or average academic background as demonstrated in four examinations.

Some of the universities require a pre-registration orientation course.

An aptitude test may be required for students seeking entrance to the National University, depending on the demand and the student population.

The Técnico degree is considered a professional degree in El Salvador, and requires two to three years of study.

Depending on the field of study, students may transfer into a Licenciatura program in the third year of a Técnico program.

A Profesorado degree is awarded for receiving a teachers' certificate.

The Licenciatura is considered the equivalent to the US Bachelor's degree and normally requires four to six years of study.

The Licenciatura in Medicine or Dentistry requires seven years of study. Students graduating with this degree are given the title "Doctor".

Most degree programs require a thesis and/or a program or examination complementing the coursework.

The Licenciatura in Medicine requires an internship (internado rotario), which is ten weeks in the area of specialization. Students enter their internship after passing a comprehensive examination (examen general privado).

Some degree programs that do not require a thesis require a graduation seminar (seminario de graduacion), a practicum (práctica pre-profesional supervisada) or a research project (trabajo de graduación) in place of the thesis.

Certain programs will also require both written and oral comprehensive examinations.

Minimum grade point averages may be required depending on the faculty and the university. The standard grading system is based on a scale of 0 - 10 with 6 as the minimum passing grade. Certain faculties within the National University provide students' ranks in class on transcripts, but most schools do not.

In addition, certain faculties within a university may require a minimum grade point average to award the degree.

Grading practices in El Salvador are strict with emphasis on the minimum passing grade. It is unusual for students to receive grades of 90 or 100, particularly at the National University or the UCA. National University and UCA students with grades of 7-8 are usually good students.

The academic year followed by most Salvadoran universities is January through November.

According to data provided by the Ministry of Education, 10 percent of the students entering university programs earn their degree.

Universidad Nacional de El Salvador

The National University is the public university and was founded over a century ago on February 16, 1841. It is located in San Salvador.

Classes were held at El Salvador at the National University campus in August 1934 for the first time since government troops closed the campus in June 1980. The return of the campus marked the end of one struggle for university officials and the beginning of another --- raising sufficient funds to rehabilitate the campus.

The degrees offered by the National University are the Técnico (considered similar to an Associate Degree), Profesorado, Licenciatura, Maestría and Doctorado degrees.

The Técnico degree is an intermediate degree generally requiring two-and-one-half to three years of study.

The Licenciatura is roughly equivalent to the Bachelor's degree, and normally requires five years of study.

Currently the only Master's degree program available is the Master's in Education.

A Doctor of Medicine program is available in Medicine or Ontology and requires seven years of study, including coursework for the undergraduate degree.

Enrollment at the university in 1985 was 27,000 students in both day and evening sessions.

The secondary school Bachillerato or Diploma de Educación Media is required for entrance to the National University. An aptitude test may also be required for admission, depending on the number of students requesting admission to a particular field of study.

All transcripts issued by the National University are signed by the Secretaría de Asuntos Académicos (Secretary of Academic Affairs).

Degrees are signed by the Rector and the Secretary-General.

Since 1979, the National University's policy has been that all degrees are authenticated by the Academic Administrator, the Secretary-General, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Foreign Relations.

Degrees issued prior to 1979 may be signed by the head of the appropriate department.

Since the authenticated diploma given by the National University is quite large, admissions officers should request a photocopy of the diploma.

Students currently enrolled in the university receive transcripts within four to six weeks of their request.

Graduates of the National University may obtain transcripts within three weeks of their request.

The National University uses a credit system in which one hour of class per week per semester and two hours of lab work per week per semester is equal to one "unidad de mérito" (unidad, or credit).

Each faculty uses a grading system based on a scale of 0 - 10 with 6 as the minimum passing grade. A grading system of 0 - 10 with 5.5 as the minimum passing grade was used in the past. Transcripts always list the grading scale used as well as the degree requirements. Transcripts do not list the student's rank in class although this is sometimes established by certain faculties. No honors are awarded, although a thesis would appear on a transcript as "with honors."

The Agronomy School requires a minimum grade point average of 7.1 for the Licenciatura degree. Students whose grade point average is lower than 7.1 must take an additional semester of work in a practicum (práctica de trabajo).

The National University no longer allows students to take make up exams in order to pass a course. However, students may repeat a course three times. Failures or classes that have been dropped during a term do not appear on the student's transcripts.

No basic program of courses is required for all students. Each faculty determines the requirements and curricula for their degree programs and fields of study. This may include basic requirements which must be completed to earn the degree.

Stronger departments tend to require basic courses.

The academic calendar observed by the National University extends from March to February and is divided into two semesters of twenty-two weeks each. A summer course (Inter-Ciclo) will be established this year to reduce the academic calendar for administrative purposes, and will include between 60 and 75 hours. There are approximately 25 holidays in the school calendar, including the "Santa Fiesta de Agosto," Christmas and Independence Day.

Universidad José Simeon Canas (UCA)

Although directed by Jesuit priests, José Simeon Cañas University is not a Catholic institution in the usual sense. The university, located in San Salvador, was founded in 1966 with funds contributed by 50 prominent businessmen.

In 1985, more than 5,000 students were enrolled in the university's three schools: Natural Sciences, Economics and Engineering.

Many programs at the UCA require a research project (trabajo de graduación) in place of a thesis. This is conducted over a period of ten months. Students are given four months for research preparation and six months to develop their work. The research projects can be conducted in groups.

Students must also complete social service (servicio social) as a requirement for all degree programs. This is an internship involving 600 hours of work.

Students from the UCA receive two transcripts. One transcript includes all relevant information and is similar to the transcript given at the National University. The second transcript lists only coursework. Rank is not provided on either transcript. Transcripts are provided within ten days of request.

Courses at the UCA are recorded in "Unidades Valorativas (UV)," which are equivalent to credits. One UV equals 1 hour of class. Each hour of lab or practicums receive one UV.

Upon failure students are given an opportunity to pass a make-up examination (examen de retrasada). If the examination is failed, students have only one opportunity to repeat the course. Failures are listed on the UCA's transcripts.

Students may withdraw from a course, with justification, within one month after the beginning of the semester (retirada con autenticación). Students may withdraw from two courses in a given semester.

Students transferring to the UCA may receive credit for coursework at their previous university if the material is equivalent to course material at the UCA, however grade is notated on the transcript (Equi). Courses failed at the student's previous university are recorded as "Equi Reprobada." Courses failed at the UCA are listed as such on the student's transcript. The UCA also lists courses not yet taken as "Pen", ("Pendiente" or pending).

The grading system used by the UCA is based on a scale of 0 - 10 points with 6 as the minimum passing grade.

Points	Designation
8-10	Excellent
7-8	Very Good
6.0-6.9	Average

Grades of 6.0 - 6.9 are considered "areas deficitarias", and students receiving grades in this range may be required to take additional courses. No honors are awarded.

A CUM in this range is considered "deficiente", and students may be required to do additional work to raise their grade point average.

The academic calendar followed by the UCA extends from February to June and from July to November. The academic year is divided into two semesters of 17 to 18 weeks each.

Universidad Albert Einstein

The Universidad Albert Einstein is a private university which was established in 1977 and is located in San Salvador.

The university offers undergraduate degree programs leading to the Licenciatura in Architecture and in Industrial, Civil, Mechanical and Electrical Engineering.

The 1984 enrollment was 2,493 students.

Entrance requirements include completion of the Bachiller degree, a certificate of good health, birth certificate and successful completion of entrance evaluations.

There are five evaluations per class which include laboratories and extra work outside class. The grading system is on a scale of 0 - 10 with 6 as the minimum passing grade.

The academic calendar includes two cycles, each lasting five months beginning in the month of February.

Graduation requirements include successful completion of all coursework, development and defense of a thesis and completion of an obligatory social work program.

Universidad Politécnica (UP)

The UP is a private university established in 1979.

Located in San Salvador, the UP offers Tecnico and Licenciatura degree programs in the areas of Architecture, Economics and Engineering.

In 1984 the total student body was 5,513.

Entrance requirements and grading systems duplicate those of the Universidad Albert Einstein.

The academic calendar includes two cycles, each lasting five months beginning in the month of February.

Graduation requirements include successful completion of all coursework, development and defense of a thesis and completion of an obligatory social work program.

Universidad José Matías Delgado:

The José Matías Delgado University is a private university located in San Salvador which was founded in 1977.

The 1984 enrollment in the university's degree programs was 2,193.

The José Matías Delgado University offers the Licenciatura in Law, including specializations in Public Administration, Economics, Business Administration, Public Administration, Banking Administration, Marketing, Accounting, International Business, Executive Secretarial Sciences, Agro-Industry, and Applied Arts.

The academic calendar includes two 20 week cycles per year. The grading system is on a scale of 0 - 10 with 6 as a minimum passing grade.

There are practical as well as theoretical evaluations and two exams that equal 30 percent of the final grade and a final exam that equals 40 percent.

Graduation requirements include successful completion of coursework, a thesis and completion of the mandatory social work program.

Universidad Alberto Masferrer (USAM)

The USAM is a private university located in San Salvador, and was founded in 1980.

In 1984, 868 students were enrolled in the Licenciatura and Doctorado degree programs offered in the areas of Health Sciences, Business Administration, Social Science, Law, Agricultural Engineering, Veterinary Medicine, and Civil Engineering.

The academic calendar consists of two 18 week cycles per year. Evaluations are made on both a theoretical and practical basis with two exams that make up 30 percent of the grade and include laboratories and extra work plus a final exam that is equivalent to 40 percent of the final grade.

The grading system and the graduation requirements duplicate those of other universities.

Universidad Leonardo Da Vinci

The Universidad Leonardo Da Vinci is a private university located in San Salvador specializing in Business Administration, Public Relations and Commerce. Founded in 1981 the university offers the Licenciatura and Técnico degrees.

The 1984 enrollment at this university was 714 students.

Admission requirements duplicate those of other Salvadoran universities.

The academic calendar consists of two cycles per year, each consisting of 18 week periods.

Evaluations are made on a theoretical and practical basis with four partial exams and a final examination for each course.

The grading system follows that of other universities as do the graduation requirements.

Universidad Tecnológica (ITCAE)

The ITCAE was originally the Technological Institute and became the Technological University in 1981.

The ITCAE is located in San Salvador and is a private institution.

The university offers the Licenciatura degree in the following areas:

- Accounting
- Architecture
- Business Administration
- Civil Engineering
- English
- Industrial Engineering
- Industrial Psychology
- Insurance
- Marketing
- Social Work

In 1984, 2,814 students were enrolled in ITCAE's degree programs.

Admission requirements include presentation of the degree of Educación Media or the Bachiller in any specialization area, completion of introduction and adaptation courses, birth and health certificates.

The academic calendar consists of two 18 week cycles per year. The graduation requirements are similar to other universities that students must take a minimum of 15 ITCAE courses.

Universidad Evangélica de El Salvador (UEES)

The UEES is a private university located in San Salvador and founded in 1981.

Degrees offered are the Licenciatura, Profesorado and Doctorado. These are in the areas of:

- Agriculture
- Architecture
- Civil Engineering
- Dentistry
- Electrical Engineering
- Humanities
- Medicine
- Nutrition
- Sciences

Total enrollment for 1984 was 2,038 students.

Admission requirements are the same as other universities. The academic calendar consists of two 28 week cycles per year.

Evaluations are of a theoretical and practical basis and there are three partial exams and a final exam during one cycle.

Graduation requirements are standardized with other national universities.

Universidad Francisco Gavidia

The Universidad Francisco Gavidia is a private university founded in 1981 and located in San Salvador.

The Técnico, Licenciatura and Profesorado degrees are offered in the areas of Economics, Business Administration, Accounting, Commerce, Science and Humanities.

The total enrollment in 1984 was 2,739 students.

The academic calendar consists of two cycles each 18 weeks long. Evaluations must consist of at least four partial exams written exams as a minimum, as well as laboratories.

The grading system is on the 0-10 scale with 6 as the minimum passing grade.

Both admission and graduation requirements are in tandem with other private Salvadoran universities.

Universidad Pedagógica de El Salvador

The Universidad Pedagógica de El Salvador is a private university founded in 1982.

The Universidad offers the Licenciatura and Profesorado degrees in the Sciences and Humanities.

In 1984, 119 students were enrolled in its degree programs.

Admission requirements are the same as other universities and the academic calendar consists of two 18 week cycles per year.

Evaluations are made on a theoretical and practical basis with six partial exams and a final exam per course.

The grading system and graduation requirements are the same as other universities.

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS:

Requirements for secondary level teachers were upgraded in the last four years from a secondary level normal school diploma to the Profesorado degree.

The Profesorado is an intermediate degree, generally given after six semesters of university education and is offered by more than 10 universities.

Teachers at the primary level must have a profesor de educación degree.

STUDENT LOANS:

EDUCREDITO is an autonomous institution, created in 1973 to bring financial assistance for education to low income men and women in El Salvador.

Essentially, EDUCREDITO functions as a guarantor for low income students who need educational loans.

Private banks offer education loans at an annual interest rate of 5 percent, but the borrower must have collateral. Many low income students simply do not qualify for standard loans.

Eligible low income students can apply to the Central Bank for the loan through EDUCREDITO. EDUCREDITO conducts a financial analysis of the student's background and recommends him or her to the Central Bank.

The interest on the Central Bank loan with EDUCREDITO as a guarantor is 4.5 percent. This is 5 percent lower than education loans with the private banks.

The last year EDUCREDITO supplied loans for study abroad was in 1981.

At the present time, EDUCREDITO guarantees loans for study in El Salvador, but not for study abroad.

MAIN IN-COUNTRY SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON US EDUCATION:

American Embassy
USIS
San Salvador, El Salvador
APO Miami, Florida 34023
Attn: Student Advisor

GLOSSARY OF TERMS:

A Distancia	correspondence program offered to secondary level students who are unable to attend regular classes.
Areas Deficitarias	grades in the range of 6.0-6.9 at the UCA. Additional courses may be required.
Bachillerato	high school diploma.
Ciclo Básico	primary education, includes nine academic years.
Ciclo Diversificado	secondary level education Students follow one of ten tracks. Each track includes three years of study.
CUM	grade point average.
Deficiente	grade point average of 6.0-6.9 at the UCA which is insufficient for graduation. Additional courses may be required to receive the degree.
Diploma de Educación Media	high school diploma.
Doctor	title given to students awarded the Licenciatura in Medicine or Dentistry.
Educación Parvularia	pre-primary education.
Equi	transfer credit for equivalent material at previous university.

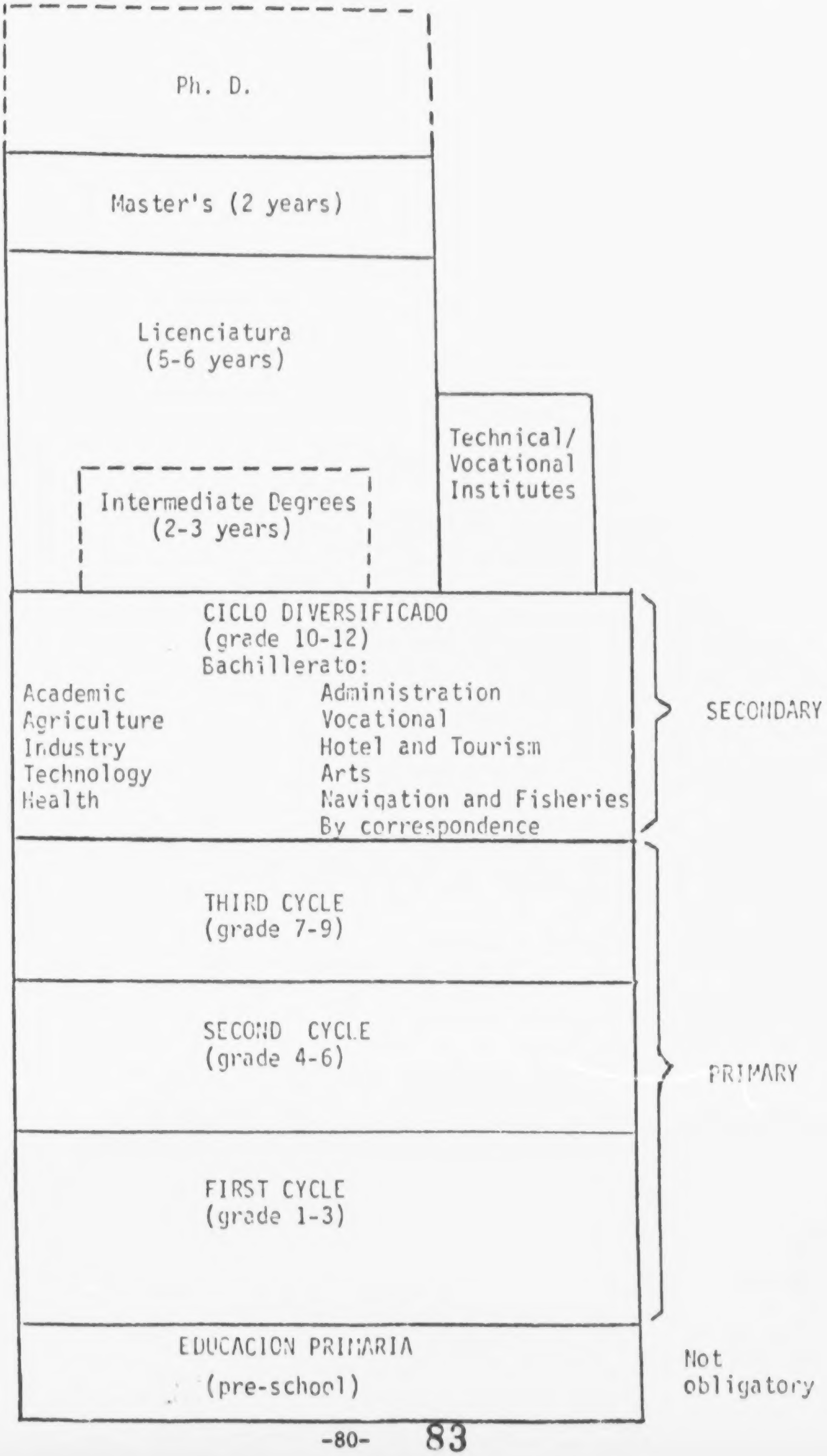
Equi Reprobada	transfer course in which the student received a failing grade.
Examen de Retrasada	make-up examination allowing students opportunity to pass a course in which a failing grade was received.
Examen General Privada	comprehensive examination.
Inter-Ciclo	summer course.
Internado Rotario	ten-week internship in the student's area of specialization required for the Licenciatura in Medicine.
Licenciatura	undergraduate degree considered equivalent to the US Bachelors degree, normally requires four to six years of study.
Pen	course pending on a student's program.
Práctica de Trabajo	one semester practicum that may be required for students whose grade point average is below that required for graduation.
Práctica Pre-Profesional Supervisada	supervised practicum. Some degree programs require the practicum in lieu of the thesis.
Primer Ciclo	first cycle of the educational system, includes grades one through three.

Profesorado	intermediate level university degree for teacher training.
Rango	rank.
Retirada Con Autenticación	withdraw with justification.
Segundo Ciclo	second cycle of the educational system, includes grades four through six.
Seminario de Graduación	seminar required for graduation in lieu of the thesis. This is offered by certain degree programs.
Servicio Social	600 hours of social service internship required for graduation from the UCA.
Técnico	intermediate level university degree, considered a professional degree in El Salvador, and requiring two to three years of study. Students may transfer into a Licenciatura program depending on the field of study.
Tercer Ciclo	third cycle of the educational system, includes grades seven through nine.

Trabajo de Graduación	research project required by some degree programs in lieu of the thesis. This is conducted over ten months, four months are devoted to research preparation and six months to developing the project. The project can be conducted by a group.
Unidad	credit.

EDUCATION LADDER

EL SALVADOR


Ph. D.
Master's (2 years)
Licenciatura (5-6 years)
Intermediate Degrees (2-3 years)
Technical/ Vocational Institutes
CICLO DIVERSIFICADO (grade 10-12)
Bachillerato:
Academic
Agriculture
Industry
Technology
Health
Administration
Vocational
Hotel and Tourism
Arts
Navigation and Fisheries
By correspondence
SECONDARY
THIRD CYCLE (grade 7-9)
SECOND CYCLE (grade 4-6)
FIRST CYCLE (grade 1-3)
PRIMARY
EDUCACION PRIMARIA
(pre-school)
Not obligatory

COUNTRY EDUCATION PROFILE
GUATEMALA
1986

STUDENT PLACEMENT IN THE U.S. UNIVERSITY SYSTEM: In general Guatemalan students perform well in U. S. colleges and universities. Difficulties in adjustment are most often the result of cultural differences, and are the same as those experienced by many Latin American students such as an unfamiliarity with independence. Most university students in Guatemala live with their families and as a result the adjustment to dormitory life may be difficult. Students may also experience problems in developing good study habits and becoming accustomed to academic pressure. In addition, some Guatemalan students may be reluctant to use their English as losing face is considered an important factor in social life. However, most Guatemalan students seeking admission to U. S. universities have traveled and are considered more sophisticated than students from other Central American countries.

Education Profile: Guatemala

The secondary school certificate is required by all Guatemalan universities for admission to any undergraduate degree program. This certificate represents 12 to 14 years of schooling, and may be considered the equivalent of the US high school diploma.

The duration of undergraduate intermediate degree programs is two to four years, depending on the student's attendance on a full or part-time basis and on the type of program. Completion of these programs allows students to transfer into baccalaureatus or licenciatura undergraduate programs in Guatemala, and should enable transfer to a US undergraduate program as would an Associate Degree. Additional courses may be required before the student enters the junior year, depending on the curriculum followed to receive the intermediate degree.

Both the Baccalaureatus and Licenciatura programs enable students to enter Masters degree programs in Guatemala, and should be required for entrance to a post-graduate program in the US. Depending on the curriculum and requirements for the degree, prerequisites may be required by the US postgraduate program. This should be determined on a case-by-case basis.

The Master's degree offered by Guatemalan institutions is equivalent to the US Master's degree.

Guatemalan schools do not use a curve in awarding grades and as a result transcripts may list grades that appear to reflect poor academic orientation. This does not necessarily present an accurate reflection of a student's abilities. In order to offer fair consideration, admissions officers should request that students supply their class rank.

Admissions officers should also be aware that in Guatemala it is unusual for students not to have to repeat some of their courses. This is due to several factors, for example, many students work and attend school at the same time leaving less than the appropriate time for studies, teaching quality varies widely and is often poor, and many teachers use overly rigorous and unrealisitic standards in awarding grades.

Only passing grades are recorded on transcripts. The transcript will not state if the student was required a make up examination to pass a specific course, but this can be determined by looking at the final examination date to see if it is out of sequence with the dates of the final examinations taken for other courses in the same semester. Students in most Guatemalan universities are not expelled from a program due to failures as most schools do not require a minimum grade point average.

Admissions officers may request the SAT, ACT or GRE (or equivalent examination in Spanish for students whose English language proficiency is not sufficient to present the English-version of the tests), and letters of recommendation from the student's professors, which may be submitted in Spanish and accompanied by an official, certified translation.

An academic aptitude test is administered free of charge to any interested student at the Del Valle University, and results would give a good indication of probable success, and would perhaps be considered a fairer indication of the ability of a non-English speaking student than the SAT.

The TOEFL should be required for students who do not request admission to Intensive English programs.

Most students fulfill foreign language requirements by studying English, and this should be assumed when it is not specified on the trasncript. However, the quality of language instruction is poor at the public and lesser private schools. When possible, a personal interview may also be used as admission criteria.

Admissions officers should also note that medical program at the San Carlos University requires the inclusion of social content in the curriculum. As a result, many of the course names listed on the transcript are confusing and may not reflect the actual content of the course. In this case, an official description of the course content should be requested by the admissions officer.

Education Profile: Guatemala

EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM BACKGROUND: Guatemala is the most populous country in Central America.

The annual population growth rate in 1978 was 3.1 percent. Statistics for 1981 list 11 teachers for every 1,000 students in the country's public schools.

Education is compulsory through the sixth grade (the equivalent to the seventh grade in the American system), although this is not enforced due to the already overcrowded conditions of Guatemala's schools.

Because the population in the country's interior often lack sufficient income and live in isolated areas, they are unable to take advantage of educational opportunities.

In 1981 the literacy rate was 47 percent. Fifty per cent of the country's illiterates are Indians whose first language is not Spanish.

Until recently the language of instruction in all public schools was Spanish, but since 1980 the Guatemalan government, with assistance from USAID, has stepped-up the training of bilingual teachers with the goal of establishing 400 bilingual schools for the first to fourth grades.

Demands for university education and technical training constantly increase due to population growth and an awareness that education is the key to better jobs, higher income and in some cases, the opportunity to work outside of the country.

The severe economic problems Guatemala is currently experiencing and the difficulty in managing available resources affects the education system at all levels.

While the government is trying to respond to the pressing need for increased coverage of the education system, and private universities are emphasizing the job-related programs that students demand, the lack of resources limits the implementation and expansion of educational programs.

According to Open Doors, approximately 1,000 Guatemalan students are currently enrolled in US colleges and universities.

Financial constraints have caused many students to abandon their plans to study abroad because of the devaluation of the Guatemalan quetzal (which used to be on par with the U.S. dollar, and is now valued at almost three quetzals to the dollar).

Severe restrictions on currency exchange, which is no longer officially authorized for intensive English courses or for technical/vocational programs affect the number of students who study abroad.

While the Guatemalan legislature is in the process of writing a new constitution, and the articles related to higher education have been rewritten, there are no significant changes.

The Council on Higher Education will remain responsible for the universities and this board will be presided over by the Minister of Education as was the case in the past.

The make up of the Council has been altered slightly, and will now include two representatives from the National University, two representatives from the private universities (previously private universities were not represented), and one representative from the Professional Colleges (Colegios Profesionales, which are similar to professional boards).

The new constitution will also change the policy of accepting credits received in universities abroad. Previously only the National University (San Carlos University, UASC) was able to approve credits. Although the National University will still be responsible for recognizing degrees granted by foreign universities, the private universities will be authorized to approve studies, and will be able to grant degrees to students who have completed programs abroad.

It should be noted that most of the private universities have residence requirements which students must meet before receiving their degrees.

The new constitution also gives the private universities more freedom in curriculum design, and gives the responsibility of supporting academic standards and authorizing new universities to the Council, therefore restricting the National University's influence. Formerly the decision for (or against) authorization of new universities was made by the Council based on the recommendation of the National University. Under the new constitution the Council alone will authorize new institutions, without consulting the San Carlos University.

PRIMARY EDUCATION: Primary education in Guatemala covers Preparatoria (kindergarten) through grade six.

The grading system most often used in primary schools, both private and public, is based on a scale of 1 to 100 with 60 as the minimum passing grade. Since schools are able to set up their own grading system, this may vary.

Most schools at this level with the exception of catholic institutions have made efforts to become coeducational over the last 20 years.

SECONDARY EDUCATION: Private schools are preferred by all socio-economic groups for prestige, ideology and politics. Generally, public secondary schools are not coeducational at the secondary level. The public secondary schools are politically-oriented, as is the National University, although the teachers are not political.

Secondary level education is divided into two cycles: the basic cycle and the diversified cycle.

The basic cycle represents grades eight through ten and is equivalent to a junior high school program in the US that would be accelerated by one year for each grade.

Three tracks are available in the diversified cycle. Each track awards the secondary level diploma, the Certificado General de Estudios which is required for university entrance.

The academic track covers grades 11 and 12 and the Bachillerato is awarded on completion of this track.

The technical track covers grades 11 - 13 and prepares students in business, primary school teaching, and other areas, such as accounting. Degrees awarded on completion of this track are the Magisterio, Perito or Bilingual Secretary.

The normal school track awards the Magisterio degree, and covers grades 11 - 13. This track prepares future teachers for work at the primary level.

Each track allows students to enter university level programs, although fields of study may be limited for students who do not have the Bachillerato because the other tracks may lack college-preparatory courses in Mathematics and Natural Sciences.

The grading system used at this level does not follow a standardized system, but is usually based on a scale of 0 - 100 with 60 as the minimum passing grade. Some schools require a 70 as the minimum passing grade.

Most schools are not able to provide the student's rank in their class.

Secondary schools may follow one of two programs, the Official Program which is the Ministry of Education accredited program, or the Private Program which allows for more freedom in the school's curriculum.

Students entering the National University must graduate from a Ministry of Education accredited program.

The top private secondary school programs in Guatemala are offered by the American School, the German School, the Austrian School, Valle Verde and the Liceo-Guatemala. These are considered experimental schools and offer more freedom in their curricula because the programs include more English. These schools do not follow the Official Program of the Ministry of Education.

The most prestigious Catholic schools include the Monte María, Don Bosco and the Javier.

In general, the public school system is very good. Teachers are fairly well-paid and require professional training to advance. However the physical condition of the public schools is a drawback.

The large public schools in Guatemala City are particularly strong academically. These are:

Instituto Central para Varones
Instituto Central para Señoritas
Instituto de Ciencias
Instituto Normal

Standards in the public secondary schools in Guatemala City are generally uniform.

Students receive secondary level diplomas after fulfilling all standards for the particular program and having received at least the minimum passing grade in all classes.

Students are also required to participate in a group project or group seminar (seminario), which is usually a group paper.

Students may graduate with honors and receive a diploma de merito or honor al merito. Diplomas awarded on completion of the secondary school program are almost always equivalent to the American high school diploma.

The high school diploma is signed by the director of the Office of Secondary Education in the Ministry of Education.

Academic standards at this level are very rigorous and both public and private schools must follow a very structured and well-rounded curriculum.

HIGHER EDUCATION: Five universities currently offer programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

The language of instruction at all universities is Spanish.

The National University is the University of San Carlos.

The four private universities are: the Rafael Landivar University, the Francisco Marroquin University, the University Mariano Galvez and the Del Valle University.

Degrees offered are the Diplomado, Técnico, Profesorado, Baccalaureatus, Licenciatura, and Maestría.

The Diplomado, Técnico and Profesorado degrees are offered at the undergraduate level and are considered intermediate degrees. The duration of these programs is generally two to four years, depending on the program and enrollment as a full or part-time student.

The Baccalaureatus is an undergraduate degree and is considered the equivalent of the US Bachelors degree. This degree enables students to enter Masters degree programs in Guatemala. Baccalaureatus programs generally require four years of full-time study.

The Licenciatura is also an undergraduate degree. This is more a professional degree than an academic degree. Licenciatura programs generally require four to six years of study, as well as a thesis.

Those graduating with a Licenciatura enter a Masters degree program at the same level as graduates with a Bachelors degree.

Guatemalan universities generally do not consider secondary level grades for admission. The secondary certificate is usually the only requirement for admission although two of the private universities require an admission examination.

Most university students in Guatemala study on a part-time basis and work while they attend school. As a result the duration of degree programs is longer than it would be for equivalent degrees in US institutions.

The universities set their own academic calendars, degree requirements and grading systems.

The number of credits required for a specific program usually appears on the transcript. In addition, transcripts normally include information such as the number of minutes in each class period.

It should be noted that all the universities in Guatemala tend to have stringent grading practices, much more so than in the US. University instructors do not grade students on a curve. In some cases, as much as 70 percent of a class may receive failing grades. As a result a student with a B average may be among the top 5 percent of the class. Due to the severe grading practices, a passing grade is often more noteworthy than would be the equivalent translation in the American university grading system.

University of San Carlos

San Carlos University is Guatemala's National University and was founded in 1676.

The main campus of the National University is located in Guatemala City, and branch campuses or centers are located in seven cities throughout Guatemala.

The regional centers do not offer all of the programs and fields of study that are available at the main campus.

In 1982 the total enrollment at the National University was 36,890.

The intermediate degrees offered include the *Profesorado*, *Técnico*, and degrees for specific areas such as Journalism *(Periodista)*, Social Work, Library Science, and Therapy among others.

Undergraduate degrees granted by the National University are the *Licenciatura* and professional degrees in Engineering, Architecture, etc.

The National University also offers Master's Degree programs (often listed as "Magister").

Students seeking admission to any of the undergraduate programs must have a secondary level diploma from a Ministry of Education accredited school.

No admission or entrance examination is required.

The National University uses a grading system based on 100 points, with 51 as the minimum passing grade. A grade of 51 - 62 would be equivalent to a C or a Pass, a grade of 63 - 69 would be considered Average or B and a grade of 70 - 100 is considered Above Average or an A.

The departments of Social Sciences and Humanitites tend to grade higher than other schools. Some students who receive a grade equivalent to a B can be considered in the upper part of their class. This can be verified by requesting the student's class ranking..

Some faculties use a credit system.

Honors are awarded in the form of scholarships, special prizes, diplomas and honorable mentions. This varies according to the school. Honors are not noted on the students' transcripts or diplomas but are included as a separate diploma.

Licenciatura students must complete a period of Supervised Professional Practice (practical experience), an Examen General Privado (comprehensive examination), a thesis and an Examen General Público (oral examination) or an Examen General de Tésis (oral thesis defense).

Some Masters degree programs require the Examen Privado and Examen Público or the Supervised Professional Exercise.

The academic calendar followed by the National University uses the semester system and extends from February to November with a two-week semester break in July. Holidays observed by the university are: Holy Week (the week before Easter Sunday), May 1, June 30, August 15, September 15, October 20 and November 1.

Francisco Marroquín University

The Francisco Marroquín University is a private university located in Guatemala City and was founded in 1971.

Total enrollment in all degree programs in 1984 was 3,369.

Francisco Marroquín offers both undergraduate and graduate degree programs. The undergraduate degree programs award the Profesorado which is an intermediate degree, the Baccalaureatus (Bachelors degree), and the Licenciatura.

Master's degree programs awarding the *Magister* are offered in Economics and Business Administration, Social Science, Medicine, Clinical Psychology, Marketing and Econometrics.

The "Instituto de Estudios Politicos" (Institute of Political Studies) offers the *Diplomado*, which is an intermediate degree.

The "Instituto de Computación" (Computer Institute) also offers *Diplomados* in Systems Analysis, Computer Operator and Programming.

Applicants to undergraduate programs at the Francisco Marroquín University must present a transcript of their last two years of secondary studies. Applicants must also take a translated and adapted version of the Differential Aptitude Test administered at the university.

Students must pass the verbal and mathematical sections of this exam with a combined score of at least 65 percent. An interview with the dean of the school the student plans to enter is also required.

Applicants at the graduate level must have a *baccalaureatus* or *licenciatura* or the equivalent and must be interviewed before gaining admission.

The grading system used at the Francisco Marroquin University is based on a scale of 0 - 100 with 61 as the minimum passing grade. A grade of 91 - 100 would be considered equivalent to an A or Excellent in the U. S. system, an 81 - 90 would be considered a B or Very Good, a 70 - 80 would be equivalent to a C or Good, and a 61 - 69 is equivalent to a D or Satisfactory. a Failing grade or F would be a grade from 0 - 60 points. The final grade in any given course is divided into the zona (the average derived from classwork and examinations during class time, accounting for 60 percent of the final grade) and the final examination grade (which accounts for 40 percent of the final grade).

In order to be eligible to take a final examination a student must maintain a zona of at least 30/60 during the semester.

Students are required to maintain an overall average of 70. Students whose averages fall below this minimum for one semester are put on probation. Those whose average falls below 70 for two semesters are expelled for the next semester.

Overall averages are weighted according to the number of academic credits taken.

In computing, the overall average, the final grade in a course is multiplied by the number of credits earned. The total is then divided by the the total number of credits taken during the semester. The final figure is the overall average. Make up examinations (examen de retrasada) can be taken only once in a given course and are presented at the beginning of the following semester.

Three types of honors are awarded by the Francisco Marroquín University.

All honors are based on the student's grade point average for all classwork and the thesis. Students who receive a grade point average in their classwork of 86 - 90 graduate cum laude, those receiving a grade point average of 91 - 95 graduate summa cum laude and students whose grade point average for classwork is 96 - 100 graduate magna cum laude.

All honors are noted on the student's transcript and on the diploma of graduation.

Additionally, students who receive 60 out of the possible 60 points for classwork are excluded from the final examination and receive a grade of 100 in the class. This is not noted on the transcript as a special honor.

Common to all fields of study at the undergraduate and graduate levels is a course in Basic Economics and two courses in Social Philosophy. Some General Studies courses are also required in most fields of study.

English language proficiency is required of all graduate and undergraduate students except those in the intermediate programs. English proficiency is demonstrated by a score of 500 on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Students obtaining passing scores are given credit for the two to four semesters of English required by the university.

Some of the licenciatura programs require a thesis. All licenciatura students must present an Examen General Privado (comprehensive examination).

The total number of credits required for the licenciatura degree also varies according to the field of study, but ranges from 152 units (similar to semester/hours in the US) to 214 credits.

Completion of the *licenciatura* requires four to five years depending on the field of study.

The *Licenciatura* in Medicine is awarded after completion of seven years of required studies with three years of pre-med coursework and four years of medical school.

The Medical School of Francisco Marroquín University is fully accredited and is registered in the Directory edited by the World Health Organization.

The first degree granted is that of Licenciate in Medicine, and the title is "Médico and Cirujano."

Post-graduate programs are currently offered leading to a Masters degree in the areas of: Opthamology, Family Medicine, General Surgery, Pathology, and Forensic Medicine.

The School of Dentistry follows the same pattern of a three-year intensive program leading to the B.S., followed by a three year program leading to the *Licenciatura* degree, with the title of "Odontologo," and is equivalent to the DDS or DDM in the United States.

The *Baccalaureatus* degree is available only in Business Administration and in Science (Pre-Med or Pre-Dentistry). This degree differs from the *licenciatura* only in that the thesis is not required. Students must complete the same course requirements and present the comprehensive examination to receive the Baccalaureatus. Degree programs at the graduate level vary in length according to the field of study. Courses offered at the Francisco Marroquín University generally include more class hours per semester than other universities in Guatemala.

The academic year at the university begins in mid-January and ends in mid-November.

The academic year for the undergraduate programs is divided into two 18-week semesters separated by a months break in June.

The academic year for graduate programs is divided into four nine-week quarters covering approximately the same period. There are no regular academic activities from mid-November to mid-January. The Francisco Marroquín University observes the following holidays: Holy Week (the week before Easter Sunday), May 1, June 30, August 15, September 15, October 20 and November 1.

There are no regular academic activities from mid-November to mid-January.

University Mariano Gálvez

The University Mariano Gálvez of Guatemala is a private university located in Guatemala City.

The university was founded in 1966 on Protestant (Evangelical) philosophies but no religious demands are made of students. Current enrollment at the main campus and the university's nine regional centers is 4,000.

Secondary teaching degrees are offered in six branches throughout the country and a two-year program in Management is given at three of the branch centers.

Degrees offered by this university are the Técnico, Profesorado and Licenciatura.

No post-graduate programs are available.

Admission is granted to those who have successfully completed an authorized Ministry of Education secondary school program.

The University Mariano Gálvez uses a grading system based on a scale of 0 - 100 points with 61 as the minimum passing grade. These include:

Points	Designation	Equivalent
91-100	Excellent	A
76-90	Very Good Distinguished	B
71-75	Good	C
61-70	Conditional	D

The final grade is composed of the "zona" (points earned through classroom participation and examinations given during class periods) and the final examination grade.

Students must accumulate a minimum of 14 zona points of a possible 50.

A student must have attended at least 80 percent of the classes to be eligible to take a final course examination. If a student fails the final examination, two opportunities to make up this test are given.

Transcripts do not specifically state if a make-up examination was presented, however, this can be determined if the date of the grade is different than that listed for other courses taken during the same term.

The curriculum of most degree programs is normally rigid and students generally do not take a course out of sequence.

All students must complete basic requirements in the first two years of their program.

The basic requirements include Economics, Social Science and Humanities courses.

Requirements for the degrees vary according to the program and field of study.

Intermediate degrees are awarded on completion of two to three years of study. Certain intermediate degree program classes are available only on weekends and require three-and-one-half years of study.

All programs require successful completion of all prescribed courses, supervised professional practice and a final general or technical-professional examination.

Licenciatura programs require a minimum of 200 hours of class work. In addition, a thesis is required as well as a comprehensive examination and an oral thesis defense (Examen General Público).

Students generally complete their licenciatura programs in five to six years.

Students receive five academic credits for each course. Class periods are 50 minutes. Students usually attend classes four hours a day or 24 hours a week, taking five courses a semester.

Classes are offered in afternoon sessions or on weekends in some programs.

The University Mariano Gálvez follows a two semester academic year, except for the intermediate degree programs offered on weekends, which follow a trimester system.

The first semester begins in February and ends in June and the second semester begins in July and ends in November.

Holidays are held to a minimum, celebrating the Guatemalan holidays during Holy Week (the week before Easter Sunday), May 1, August 15, September 5, October 20 and November 1. There is also a week vacation between semesters in July.

Courses follow the semester system and no annual courses are offered.

Del Valle University

The Del Valle University is a private institution founded in 1966 and located in Guatemala City.

Degrees are offered at undergraduate and graduate levels and are the Profesorado, Baccalaureatus, Licenciatura and Masters.

Enrollment in the Elementary and Secondary Teaching Certificate Program was 536. Students participating in this program are considered part-time students.

Students seeking admission to the Del Valle University's programs must submit their secondary school diploma and take an admission examination. This is the same examination required by the Francisco Marroquín University.

Students scoring in the lower half of all those who presented the examination are not admitted to the Del Valle University.

The grading system used by Del Valle University is based on a scale of 0 - 100 with a minimum passing grade of 51. The scale ia:

Points	Designation	Equivalent
91-100	Excellent	A
80-90	Very Good	B
73-79	Good	C+
67-72	Average	C
60-66	Below Average	C-
51-59	Passing	D
0-50	Unacceptable/Reprobado	F

Del Valle University awards honors in the form of the bachillerato avanzado and based on the student's grade point average and graduation thesis. Students who receive a grade point average above 90 and have completed an outstanding thesis graduate cum laude. This is noted on the student's degree, transcript and certificate of graduation.

The profesorado program offers teachers an opportunity to continue their post-secondary studies and to earn secondary teaching certification in one of five areas: Natural Sciences, History and Social Sciences, Language and Literature, Mathematics, or English. Students in this program must pass twenty seven courses in education and three in a modern language. Student teaching is also required.

A special profesorado program is also offered for Teaching Exceptional Children or Learning Problems for Primary School, leading to a B.S. or B.A.

The University College (Colegio Universitario) program offers integrated studies in Science and Humanities for highly motivated, academically prepared students seeking a general liberal arts program.

Advanced placement (Bachillerato Avanzado) students finishing their third year of secondary school (equivalent to tenth grade in the US system) may apply for admission. After two years of accelerated general studies taught by high school teachers and university professors, students may opt to: 1) enter as a sophomore in the liberal arts program leading to a Baccalaureatus degree; 2) follow a five-year licenciatura program; or 3) take one or two years of courses for teaching certification.

The first option is designed to offer outstanding secondary students the opportunity to finish a degree similar to a Bachelors degree in its liberal arts and course requirements.

Students seeking entrance to this program must present a transcript of previous studies, take an admission examination and submit to a personal interview.

Completion of the licenciatura degree requires five years of study and includes approximately 60 courses plus field work and a thesis.

The first year curriculum is common to all majors and includes courses in English, Mathematics, Chemistry, Biology, Guatemalan Culture, Language and Literature and Philosophy.

After the first year, students follow a course of study designed by their department.

Each curriculum includes required and elective courses.

Generally, electives are not included as part of the curriculum at Latin American universities, but at the Del Valle University students enroll in approximately one elective course per term.

The licenciatura in Medicine was offered from 1978 to 1983 through a joint program between the Del Valle University and the Francisco Marroquín University.

Requirements for the Master's degree include a minimum of one year of academic coursework (approximately 30 credit hours) beyond the licenciatura degree and a thesis.

The academic year is divided into three terms beginning in early February and ending in early December. The length of the first and third terms is 17 weeks, while the second term is eight weeks.

Students usually enroll in six courses during the first and third terms and in three courses during the eight week term.

There is a one-week break between terms.

The Del Valle University observes the following Guatemalan national holidays: May 1, May 10, June 30, August 15, September 14 - 16, October 20, November 1 and Holy Week (the week before Easter Sunday). There are no scheduled academic activities in December and January.

Rafael Landívar University

The Rafael Landívar University is a private, coeducational Jesuit university founded in 1961 and is located in Guatemala City.

The enrollment at the central campus in 1935 was 5,100 and total enrollment including the four regional centers was 7,190.

Degrees offered by the Rafael Landivar University are the Diplomado, Profesorado, Técnico, Licenciatura and Masters. Students must present their secondary school certificate to gain entrance to any of the degree programs.

The grading system is based on a scale of 0 - 100 points with a minimum passing grade of 61. The scale is:

Points	Designation	Equivalent
86-100	Excellent	A
71-85	Good	B
61-70	Passing	C

The Rafael Landívar University does not usually provide a student's class rank on the transcript.

Students whose grade point average is considered excellent are excused from the examen general privado (comprehensive examination). Honors of cum laude and summa cum laude are awarded based on the student's thesis work.

The Profesorado, Diplomado and Técnico degrees are considered one or two grades inferior to the licenciatura degree and are more practically oriented.

The duration of the diplomado programs is two years, while three years of study are required for the profesorado and técnico degrees.

Licenciatura programs at the Rafael Landívar University generally require five to six years of study and a thesis.

In some areas of study within the field of Engineering seven years of study are required.

In addition to completing course requirements and the thesis, licenciatura students must pass an Examen General Privado (comprehensive examination) and an Examen Público o de Tésis (oral examination or oral defense of the thesis).

The Rafael Landivar University academic calendar follows the semester system. First semester classes begin in early January and are completed in mid-May. Second semester classes begin in Early August and are completed in November.

Each field of study and degree program follows a slightly different calendar.

Other Programs Awarding Academic Credit

Many institutes in Guatemala offer commercial courses which do not award academic credit. These are known as "Cursos Libres" and translations accompanying transcripts should state a description of the course and whether or not it is accredited.

Commercial institute programs are not accepted by Guatemalan universities for academic credit.

Some commercial technical programs are offered at the secondary level and students may obtain credit after presenting an equivalency examination, similar to the GED.

Programs awarding academic credit in Guatemala are associated with one of the universities, as only the universities are authorized by the Ministry of Education to offer accredited programs.

The Feminine Institute of Higher Education (IFES), the National Institute of Public Administration (INAP) and the Central American Institute of Nutrition (INCAP) are associated with the National University and offer accredited programs. IFES offers three-year intermediate level programs in Interior Design and in Administrative Studies for institutional administration.

A diploma is awarded on completion of these programs.

Five-year licenciatura programs for both fields of study offered at IFES are currently pending approval.

INAP offers a 22 Master's Degree program in Public Administration.

INCAP offers a Master's Degree program in Nutrition.

All diplomas and degrees offered by these institutions are stamped or signed by the Ministry of Education and/or the National University.

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS: Primary school teachers in Guatemala must have a primary school teaching certificate which represents one additional year of schooling past secondary school.

Both private and public school secondary level teachers must have the Profesorado de Secundaria Enseñanza, which is the secondary school teaching certificate awarded on completion of a three-and-one-half year university level program.

This program is offered in most subject areas.

The Ministry of Education has become increasingly strict regarding this requirement.

Secondary school teachers who do not have their certificate are able to attend university programs offered on week-ends. These programs for in-service teachers are offered at branch university campuses throughout the country.

University instructors must have their licenciatura except in the case of special short-term technical programs, such as Journalism or Drafting, where instructors are often professionals in the field.

In some cases, outstanding licenciatura students in the last year of their programs are given financial assistance through work as teaching assistants.

EDUCATIONAL CREDIT: All of the private universities in Guatemala offer student loans to needy students, as well as limited partial scholarships.

The National University charges very low tuition and also gives limited monthly stipends to low-income students.

The Ministry of Labor also offers educational credit for study abroad, but due to currency exchange problems this program will probably be limited in the future.

MAIN IN-COUNTRY SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON US EDUCATION:

Cultural Affairs Officer
USIS
American Embassy
Guatemala, Guatemala

Instituto Guatemalteco
Americano (IGA)
Ruta 1, 4-05, Zona 4
Guatemala, Guatemala
Attn: Director of
Cultural Activities/
Student Advisor

GLOSSARY OF TERMS:

Arquitecto	title given to a student who has received the Licenciatura in Architecture.
Baccalaureatus	undergraduate degree similar to the Bachelor's Degree in the US, usually requiring four years of study. This degree enables students to enter a Master's degree program in Guatemala. This is more an academic degree than the Licenciatura, which is more like a professional degree.
Bachillerato	secondary level diploma awarded on completion of the academic track in the diversified cycle.
Bachillerato Universitario	diploma awarded on completion of the Colegio Universitario program at the Universidad Del Valle.
Certificado General de Estudios	certificate of completion of secondary level.
Ciclo Básico	first cycle of secondary level, representing grades eight through ten, and equivalent to a junior high school program in the U. S. that is stepped-up one year for each grade.
Ciclo Diversificado	second cycle of secondary level. Students may follow one of three tracks: academic, technical or normal school. Each track enables students to enter university level programs.

Colegios Profesionales	similar to professional boards ("Professional Colleges").
Colegio Universitario	("University College") integrated studies program in the Sciences and Humanities offered by the Universidad Del Valle for highly motivated, academically prepared students seeking a general liberal arts program. Available to students finishing the third year of secondary school in an Advanced Placement program. The program offers two years of accelerated general studies taught by university professors and high school teachers, and allows students to enter a Baccalaureatus program in the Sophmore year. Students are awarded the Bachillerato Universitario on completion of this program.
Cursos Libres	commercial programs for which no academic credit is received.
Diplomado	intermediate undergraduate degree, usually two to four years in duration depending on the student's enrollment on a full or part-time basis and enables students to transfer into a Baccalaureaus or Licenciatura degree program as would an Associate Degree.
Doctor	title given to a student who has recieved the Licenciatura in Medicine or Dentistry.

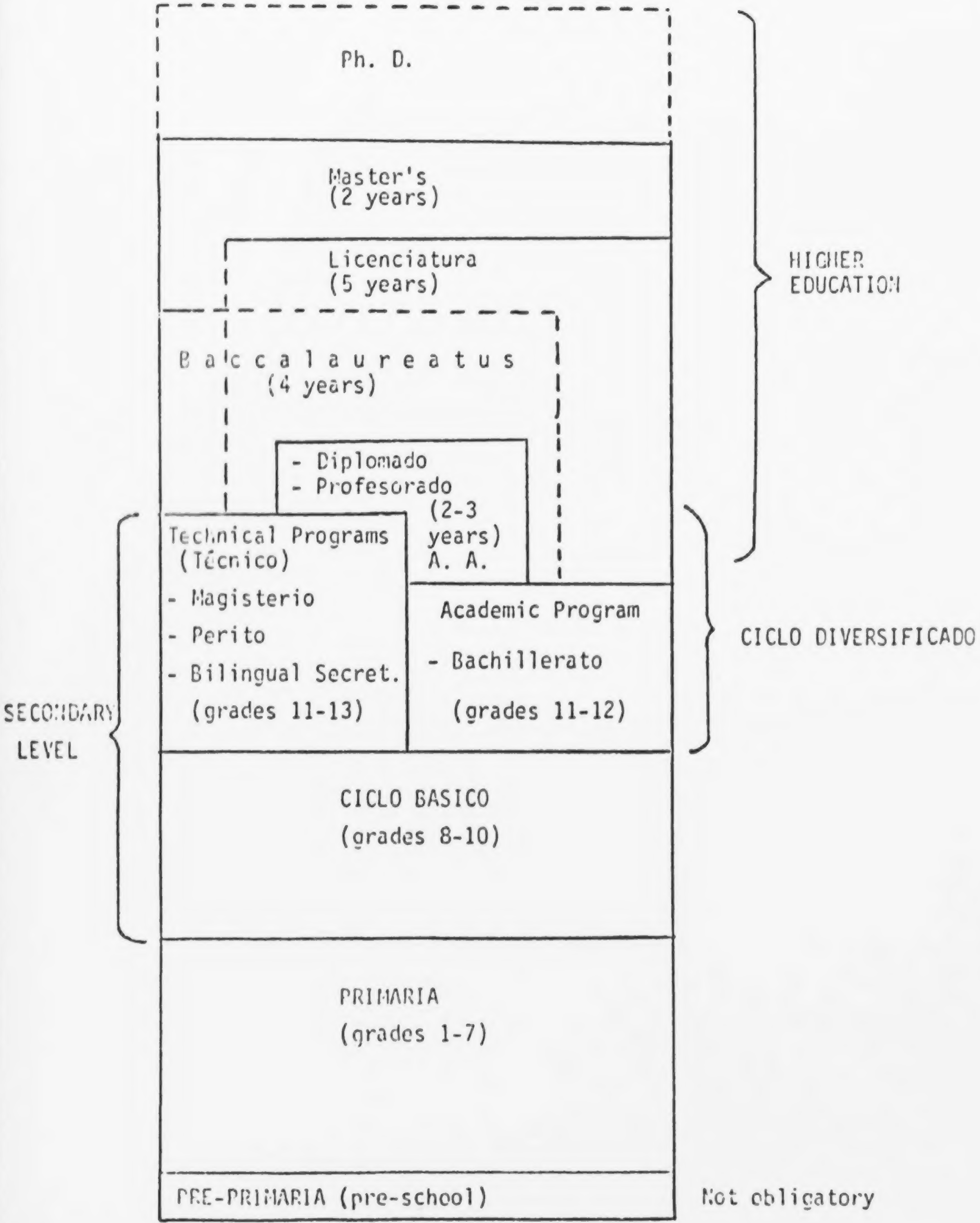
Ejercicio Profesional Supervisado	(supervised professional practice), period of practical experience for university credit required for certain degree programs.
Examen de Retrasada	make-up examination taken by students with failing grade, giving the opportunity to pass a specific course.
Examen General Privado	comprehensive examination.
Examen General Público	oral comprehensive examination.
Examen General de Tésis	oral thesis defense.
Ingeniero	title given to a student who has received the Licenciatura in Engineering.
Licenciatura	undergraduate degree similar to the Bachelor's Degree in the U. S., usually requiring four to six years of study and a thesis (or project) and enabling students to enter a Master's degree program in Guatemala. This is more a professional degree than an academic degree.
Maestría	Master's Degree.
Magister	Master's Degree.
Magisterio	secondary level diploma awarded on completion of the technical and normal school tracks in the diversified cycle.

Médico y Cirujano	title given to students receiving the Licenciatura in Medicine.
Odontólogo	title given to students receiving the Licenciatura in Dentistry.
Perito	secondary level diploma awarded on completion of the technical track in the diversified cycle.
Profesorado	intermediate undergraduate degree, usually two to four years in duration depending on the student's enrollment on a full or part-time basis and enables students to transfer into a Baccalaureaus or Licenciatura degree program as would an Associate Degree.
Programa Oficial	Ministry of Education accredited secondary level program. Required for entrance to the National University.
Programa Privado	secondary level education program used by some private schools. Allows more freedom in the school's curriculum than the Official Program.
Rango	rank.
Reprobado	Unacceptable.

Técnica en Administración	diploma awarded by the Feminine Institute of Higher Education on completion of the three-year intermediate level program in Administration Studies. This program is for institutional administration such as hospital or hotel administration. This program is associated with the National University and awards academic credit for transfer to a Guatemalan university.
Técnico	intermediate undergraduate degree, usually two to four years in duration depending on the student's enrollment on a full or part-time basis and enables students to transfer into a Baccalaureaus or Licenciatura degree program as would an Associate Degree.
Zona	points earned through class participation and examinations given during class time.

EDUCATION LADDER

GUATEMALA


Ph. D.
Master's (2 years)
Licenciatura (5 years)
Baccalaureatus (4 years)
- Diplomado
- Profesorado
(2-3 years)
A. A.
HIGHER EDUCATION
Technical Programs (Técnico)
- Magisterio
- Perito
- Bilingual Secret.
(grades 11-13)
Academic Program
- Bachillerato
(grades 11-12)
CICLO DIVERSIFICADO
SECONDARY LEVEL
CICLO BASICO
(grades 8-10)
PRIMARIA
(grades 1-7)
PRE-PRIMARIA (pre-school)
Not obligatory

COUNTRY EDUCATION PROFILE
HONDURAS
1986

STUDENT PLACEMENT IN THE US UNIVERSITY SYSTEM: Secondary school certificates represent 11 to 13 years of schooling, and are the equivalent of a US high school diploma.

Undergraduate programs in the universities run at least four years (some for five or six).

Students holding a Honduran *Licenciatura* should qualify for admission into a Master's degree program.

Applicants holding a *Bachillerato Universitario* degree may also be considered for a Master's degree program, depending on the number of credits and curriculum of their undergraduate program. It should be noted that the *Bachillerato Universitario* program is a four-year undergraduate program.

Applicants who hold an advanced degree may be considered for admission at the post-graduate level.

Honduran students perform well in US colleges and universities. Difficulties in adjustment sometimes result from insufficient language fluency capability, and cultural factors such as the protective role of the family, unfamiliarity with their new found independence, travel, distances and cold climates.

Honduran schools do not use curves in awarding grades, consequently transcripts may list grades that appear low. Admissions officers should request that students supply their class rank to allow for accurate appraisal.

As in the US, admissions officers may request the SAT, ACT, or GRE (or the equivalent in Spanish), and letters of recommendation.

EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM BACKGROUND: Education in Honduras is free and compulsory through the sixth grade. Sixty-eight percent of the population of Honduras is under 25 years of age with a literacy rate of 47 percent.

Spanish is the language of instruction in public schools.

The Ministry of Public Education controls all formal education below the university level, while the National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH) controls post-secondary institutions.

In 1985, total budget expenditures on public education were $162,683, a 33 percent increase over 1984, when 16 percent of the national budget was dedicated to education. The current national budget has dedicated 17.5 percent of its budget to education.

PRIMARY EDUCATION: The school system at this level is comprised of tuition-free public schools, religious and secular private schools. Pre-primary education called kinder or preparatoria is for children from four to six years of age.

Primary education consists of a six year program divided into two cycles of three years each for children from 7 to 13 years of age. While education at this level is constitutionally mandated, it is not widely available due to a lack of supervision, facilities, faculty and finances. While 80 percent of the population in his age group is registered in primary schools, not everyone completes this cycle. The government is unable to offer the six grades throughout the country.

Currently, there is a 47 percent coverage of these grades nationally.

In 1984, eight percent of the national budget was dedicated to educational expenditures at this level.

SECONDARY EDUCATION: The secondary system is designed to maximize the social and economic benefit to the country, while allowing each individual to achieve his full potential.

Secondary education or "educacion media" is free and contains two successive cycles, with a combined duration of six years. In 1985, enrollment in "educacion media" was 93,061 for public schools and 71,208 for private schools for a total of 164,269 students.

After completion of the first common cycle, students choose one of nine tracks in the diversified cycle (ciclo diversificado).

The number of years required to obtain the secondary school diploma depends on the track, consequently students may graduate from secondary school in grades 11, 12, or 13 depending on the track followed.

The Honduran educational system provides specialized alternatives to equip individuals with marketable skills at the end of the diversified cycle.

The following lists the tracks and duration of programs in the diversified cycle:

TRACK	NUMBER OF YEARS
Academic Program (Bachillerato en Ciencias y Letras)	2
Art Education (Artes Plásticas) or Music Education (Educación Musical)	3
Business Administration (Bachillerato Administración de Empresas Intermedias)	2
Commercial Program (Educación Comercial)	3
Normal School (Educación Normal)	3

Science and Technology (Bachillerato en Ciencias y Tecnología)	2
Secretarial Sciences (Ciencias Secretariales)	2
Social Service (Bachillerato en Promoción Social)	2
Technical Program (Educación Técnica)	4

Educational programs have been designed to support the varied tracks.

Diplomas awarded on completion of the diversified cycle are *perito*, *bachillerato* and *profesor*. The *profesor* allows the student to teach at the primary level, or in art or music.

Students graduating from all tracks, except the secretarial sciences track, may gain admission to universities in Honduras.

In the 17 to 19 age group registered for *Educación Media*, about 35 percent complete the *Ciclo Diversificado*.

About 50 percent of the total of the students completing secondary school continue on to university programs.

Students in the military academy, (Escuela Militar Francisco Morazán) and in the police academy (Escuela Nacional de Policia), receive the diploma of *Bachillerato en Ciencias y Letras* (Academic Program) following a three year program.

Students graduating at the secondary level from the private, bilingual school programs are also well-prepared to enter US colleges or universities.

Bilingual school programs last four years and in some cases include both American and Honduran education programs.

Five private bilingual schools are accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Their faculties feature American-certified teachers.

These schools are:

Academia Los Pinares in Tegucigalpa
American School in Tegucigalpa
International School in San Pedro Sula
Escuela Elvel de Tegucigalpa
Mazapan School in La Ceiba

There are several new private bilingual schools offering good programs which show promise.

The bilingual schools award two certificates upon graduation, the bachillerato and a US high school diploma.

Transcripts follow the same format as those issued in the US. In addition, bilingual school students are required to present the SAT or ACT and the TOEFL for college admission in Honduras.

The San Miguel School (all boys) and the María Auxiliadora, (girls school) in Tegucigalpa are two exceptional private non-bilingual schools.

The San Miguel School offers an excellent English program, and both schools are known for their emphasis on discipline and development of good work habits. Tuition at these schools is significantly lower than the bilingual schools.

The secondary level grading system is based on a scale of 0-100, with a minimum passing grade of 60; 1-59 failing, 60-79 good, 80-89 very good and 91-100 outstanding.

Regular tests are administered throughout the year at the secondary level.

Students who are not able to pass a course are given two opportunities to present a make-up examination (examen de recuperación). These opportunities are offered within 15 days of the semester end and at the beginning of the next school year. This appears on the students' transcripts with the correct grade for the examen de recuperación.

The make-up examinations offered by the private bilingual schools are particularly rigorous. Students rarely pass these exams.

The academic calendar used by Honduran schools is from February to November, with holidays during Holy Week, 11th of June, 14th of April, 1st of May, 15th of September, and 3rd, 12th and 21st of October. Vacations are during the months of December and January.

The bilingual private schools which offer a dual education system use the American academic calendar.

HIGHER EDUCATION: The Ministry of Education considers the role of higher education to be one of contributing to scientific, humanistic, technological research, and to the general diffusion of culture and study of national problems.

Higher education is controlled by the National University.

Spanish is the language of instruction.

A secondary school certificate is required for entrance to the universities or to the teacher's college.

Any of the secondary level tracks except Secretarial Sciences enable students to enter university programs.

At present, the universities operate under an open admissions policy, and entrance examinations are required only at the private universities.

The National University expects to initiate entrance examinations in the near future.

These examinations will not necessarily be used in the selection process, but will assist the university in placing students and in determining the requirements for remedial or refresher courses in Mathematics and Spanish.

Honduran universities use a grading scale of 0-100, 1-29 is insufficient, 30-59 behind, 60-79 good, 80-89 very good and 90-100 outstanding. One credit hour is equivalent to one hour of class per day.

The National University has three campuses: the main campus in Tegucigalpa, and campuses in San Pedro Sula and La Ceiba.

Small private universities operate in San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa.

Three additional public institutions offer programs at the higher education level. These are: the National Agriculture School, the National School of Forestry Sciences, and the Teacher's College. The agriculture schools and the forestry school offer technical programs at the higher education level.

The Escuela Agrícola Panamericana is considered a private institution of higher education with its own autonomy.

Degrees offered at this level are the Agrónomo, Dasónomo, Bachiller Universitario, Profesor, and Licenciado.

The Agrónomo and Dasónomo degrees are intermediate level technical degrees which require three years of study.

The Bachiller Universitario is awarded on completion of a four-year university program, and is similar to the Bachelor's degree in the US, as is the Profesor degree. The Licenciatura is generally considered the equivalent of the US Bachelor's degree.

The duration of licenciatura progams depends on the area of study, and is generally five to six years. This is considered a professional degree and requires one to two years of additional study (or about 12 courses) and a thesis in addition to the requirements for the Bachiller Universitario.

Master's degree programs in Honduras are considered equivalent to Master's degree programs in the US.

No doctoral programs are available at the present time.

The academic calendar is February to November, with holidays in July (semester break), December, January and Holy Week. However, during the July and January-February vacations courses are regularly offered.

National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH)

The UNAH is a public university and until recently was the only university in Honduras. It was founded in 1847.

The main campus is located in Tegucigalpa and two regional centers offer university programs for credit. UNAH controls all post-secondary institutions. Degrees offered by the UNAH are the Profesor, Bachiller Universitario, Licenciado and Master's.

Master's degree programs include:

PROGRAM	YEARS OF STUDY
Accounting	2 (45 credit hours)
Dermatology	3
Economics and Urban Planning	2 (74 credit hours)
Gynecology and Obstetrics	3
Internal Medicine	3
Orthopedics and Traumatology	3
Pathology	3
Pediatrics	3
Public Administration	2 (45 credit hours)
Social Work	2 (64 credit hours)
Surgery	3

Both the Accounting and Public Administration master's programs are being coordinated with the Instituto Tecnológico de Monterrey. New Master's programs will include those in Geotechnics, Architectural Engineering and Construction Engineering.

Current enrollment at all campuses is approximately 31,000.

Students must present the secondary school diploma (certificación de educación media) to gain admission to the UNAH.

At present, no admissions examinations are required. An admission exam in Math and in Spanish will probably be required within the next year, since UNAH cannot facilitate the large number of students who request admission.

Refresher courses in Math and Spanish will be initiated in the next academic year as required basic courses for all degree programs.

The grading system used by the UNAH is based on a scale of 0-100 points with 60 as the minimum passing grade.

The scale is as follows: 0-29 Insufficient, 30-59 is an F or Failure, 60-75 Good and equivalent to a C, 76-89 Very Good and equivalent to a B, and 90-100 Outstanding and equivalent to an A.

Students receiving a grade of 40-60 may take a make-up exam (examen de recuperación). Students receive only one opportunity to take the make-up examination to pass a course. Transcripts record only those courses passed.

Class periods at the UNAH are 50 minutes.

The Bachillerato Universitario at UNAH is an undergraduate degree requiring three to four years of study for 130 to 150 academic credits in a licenciatura.

The Licenciatura is the undergraduate degree that is roughly equivalent to the Bachelor's degree in the US and requires 180 to 220 credits depending on the field of study. This represents about five years of study. A thesis is generally required for the Licenciatura in most areas. Students who have successfully completed a licenciatura program in Engineering are given the title "Ingeniero" (Engineer). Students who have successfully completed a licenciatura program in the fields of Medicine, Dentistry and Pharmacy are given the title "Doctor".

Students who have their Bachillerato Universitario may obtain their Licenciatura with an additional two years of study.

The academic calendar used by the UNAH follows the semester system. The first semester begins in February and ends in June and the second semester begins in July and ends in November. Each semester is roughly 18 weeks. Holidays include those recognized by the government in addition to those of Holy Week.

University of San Pedro Sula (USPS)

The University of San Pedro Sula is a private university founded in August of 1978 and located in San Pedro Sula, the country's commercial center.

The enrollment in 1985 was 1,100.

Degrees offered by the University of San Pedro Sula are the Técnico and Licenciatura degrees.

Admission is granted to those students who have graduated from a Honduran secondary school.

Applicants to the USPS must also pass an admission examination. Each department uses its own examination which is usually a test of general culture.

The admissions examination is not used for selection, but provides an idea of the student's preparation.

The grading system used by the USPS is based on a scale of 0-100 with 60 as the minimum passing grade. The grading scale is as follows:

Points	Designation	Academic Pts.	Equivalent
90-100	Excellent	4	A
80-89	Very Good	3	B
70-79	Good	2	C
60-69	Passing	1	D
0-59	Failing	0	F

Students who fail a course are given one chance to raise their grade by taking a make-up examination. An average grade of D is acceptable for graduation, however a student who has an average grade of less than a C is required to take a comprehensive examination covering all coursework. This examination is given by three professors. If the student passes this examination, he can continue with the thesis portion of the licenciatura program.

The técnico certificate is awarded on completion of an intermediate degree program. The duration of study for the técnico is two to three years.

Licenciatura programs generally require four to six years of study depending on the area of study.

All students must take basic required courses in the areas of Mathematics, Architecture and Engineering.

In addition, each field has prerequisites. Some fields of study also require two to four semesters of English.

The Licenciatura degree programs require between 190-200 credits.

A thesis is a basic requirement for earning the licenciatura.

Regulations pertaining to the thesis are determined by each school.

The academic calendar followed by the USPS is divided into two semesters. The first semester begins in February and ends in June, the second semester begins in July and ends in November. There is also a short term between December and February. Holidays include Holy Week and the 11th of June.

José Cecilio del Valle University

The José Cecilio del Valle University is a private university located in Tegucigalpa. It was founded in 1978.

The 1985 enrollment at this university was 200.

Degrees are offered in technical areas at the undergraduate level for Bachillerato Universitario and Licenciatura programs.

Students are admitted to this university if they have successfully completed their secondary school program.

The grading system used at the José Cecilio del Valle University is as follows:

Points	Designation	Academic Pts.	Equivalent
95-100	Excellent	4	A
90-94	Very Good	3.5	B+
85-89	Good	3	B
80-84	Average	2.5	C+
75-79	Graduation Minimum	2	C
70-74	Permanency Minimum	1.5	D+
65-69	Minimum	1	D
0-64	Failing	0	F

Students must maintain a minimum 1.5 grade point average.

Students who fail a course two times are expelled from the university.

Honors are awarded only for graduation, however, these awards are not included on the diplomas.

Class periods are 90 minutes.

The José Cecilio del Valle University academic calendar follows a trimester system of 11 weeks for each term. The first trimester begins in January and ends in March, the second begins in April and ends in June. Summer courses are offered from July to September and the final trimester begins in October and ends in December. Holidays include Holy Week, official government holidays and the 11th of June and the 22nd of November.

Escuela Superior del Profesorado "Francisco Morazán"

This is the public higher normal school. It was founded in December, 1956 and is located in Tegucigalpa with a regional center in San Pedro Sula.

Current enrollment in Tegucigalpa is 2,059 and 1,200 at the branch campus.

The Escuela Superior also offers a correspondence program (educación a distancia) with an enrollment of 2,300 students.

Degrees offered by the Escuela Superior are the Profesorado de Educación Media (secondary school professor), certificate programs or intermediate degree programs and the Maestro de Educación Primaria (primary school teacher).

The Profesorado is roughly equivalent to a Bachelor's degree in Education in the US.

The Maestro de Educación Primaria is offered as a special program for rural primary school teachers who want to upgrade their qualifications. The number of credits depends on the specialty area the students may choose.

The specialties, years of study and credits are as follows:

Specialty	Yrs. of Study	Credits
Administration	4	151
Commmercial Education	4	151
Industrial Technician	4	140
Letters	4	151
Mathematics	4	131
Natural Sciences	4	136
Orientation	4	151
Physical Education	4	131
Pre-School Education	2	63
School Administration	2	68
Social Sciences	4	131
Social Worker	4	126
Special Education	2	76
Supervision	2	90

Students may enroll in the Escuela Superior on completion of the Honduran secondary school program.

Classes are offered in day or evening sessions.

The grading system used by the Escuela Superior is based on a scale of 0-100 points with 60 as the minimum passing grade and minimum semester average required.

The grading system is equivalent to the US grading system as follows:

POINTS	DESIGNATION	EQUIVALENT
90-100	Excellent	A
80-89	Very Good	B
60-79	Satisfactory	C
30-59	Failing	F

Though honors are awarded they are not recorded on the certificate.

Students who receive less than a C three times in the same course are expelled.

There are five evaluations for each course, each of which receives a different weight in the final grade. The weight is determined by the teacher. The evaluations include: 1) the final examination, 2) class participation, 3) other periodic examinations, 4) written work and 5) labs.

Transcripts can also list how much practical and how much theoretical work was involved in each course.

Make-up examinations are given for theoretical but not practical coursework.

Class periods are 50 minutes long.

The Profesorado degree requires from 120 to 145 academic units and is offered in different specialties.

The certificate or intermediate degree programs require two to three years of study.

The Profesor de Educación Pre-Escolar (pre-school professor) is an intermediate degree program and requires 42 academic credits.

The Supervisor de Escuelas Primarias (primary school supervisor) is also an intermediate degree program and requires 74 academic credits.

The Director de Escuela Primaria (primary school director) requires a total of 56 academic credits. Some areas of specialty require a foreign language.

Other Programs Awarding Academic Credit

Other public institutions offering university level programs are the Escuela Agrícola Panamericana, Escuela Nacional de Agricultura, Escuela Nacional de Ciencias Forestales and the Escuela Nacional de Policía.

Escuela Agrícola Panamericana (EAP)

The EAP is an autonomous, private institution founded in 1941.

It is located in the Yeguare River Valley at the east of Tegucigalpa in Zamorano.

This institution teaches farming in a 33 month intensive program.

Students learn while on-the-job and obtain practical experience in the Agricultural sciences including Zootechnics, Agronomy, Horticulture, Piciculture, Forestry and Agricultural Economics.

They receive an "Agronomist" certificate. Following their studies at EAP, they proceed to the US to complete their program (BS/BA) in a year or year and a half.

The state of Delaware through its "Hospital and Schools Abroad Program" includes EAP.

The school is known for its herbarium, which is considered one of the best in the Hemisphere.

Escuela Nacional de Ciencias Forestales (ESNACIFOR)

This school was created in 1969 as a result of tripartite cooperative effort among the Development Program of the United Nations, the Organization of the United Nations for Agriculture and Feeding (FAO) and the government of Honduras through the Natural Resources Secretariat.

This school is located in Siguatepeque, Comayagua. Since 1972 it has offered the Perito Forestal and Bachilleres Forestales degrees.

Escuela Nacional de Agricultura (ENA)

This school was founded in 1952 and is located in Catacamas, Olancho. It is a public educational institution, dependent on the National Resources Secretariat.

ENA offers a Agrónomos Generalistas degree.

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS:

Most teachers at UNAH are required to hold either a BS or a BA. The Foreign Language department differs. Instructors are required to have certification of their foreign language ability.

STUDENT LOANS:

EDUCREDITO is an autonomous institution that offers student loans for study at the higher education level in Honduras and abroad.

Prior to 1976, EDUCREDITO was a private institution. In 1976 the organization was incorporated into the public sector and now offers loans according to guidelines established by the "Ley Orgánica" (Organic Law). At the present time, EDUCREDITO loans are offered for study in-country and abroad. However, undergraduate students must complete two years in Honduras before being eligible to apply for a loan. Graduate loans must be in fields not offered in country and limited to a maximum of two years and a total of 17,500 dollars.

Loans cover tuition, fees, personal expenses, thesis preparation and books.

Increases in university tuition and fees are also covered by the loan.

EDUCREDITO will also award loans for a maximum of six months Intensive English language training in addition to undergraduate and graduate studies.

Priority fields of study are Agricultural Engineering, Fisheries, Electrical Engineering and Computer Science.

Students may not receive loans for areas of study in which the job market is already saturated.

Ten percent interest is charged on loans for study in-country, while 13 percent interest is charged on loans for study abroad.

The amortization period depends on the amount of the loan.

A three-month grace period is given after completion of studies to allow students to locate employment.

All loans require the student's signature and that of two guarantors, under 56 years-of-age.

Between 1981 and 1984, 254 students attended universities in the United States with loans from EDUCREDITO, and studied in the areas of Agriculture, Engineering Science, Health Science, Education, Social Science and technical majors at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Most recipients of EDUCREDITO loans are men.

In 1985, 125 EDUCREDITO sponsored students were in the US. A total of 981 loans were given for study in Honduras.

EDUCREDITO lists the following as requirements for obtaining loans. Students must:

- Present application for loan and transcripts
- Demonstrate financial need
- Not have a loan pending with EDUCREDITO
- Have signatures of two guarantors less than 56 years of age
- Submit commercial and bank references
- Present a letter of admission to a university
- Have a minimum grade point average of 70/100 (that average must be maintained during their studies or the loan will be suspended).

For study abroad the student must also present:

- A study plan
- A list of expenses

MAIN IN-COUNTRY SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON US EDUCATION:

Cultural Affairs Officer
USIS
American Embassy
Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Centro Cultural
Sampedrano
San Pedro Sula, Honduras
Attn: Director

Instituto Hondureño de Cultura
Interamericana
Apartado 201
Tegucigalpa, Honduras
Attn: Student Counselor

Escuela Internacional
San Pedro Sula, Honduras
Attn: Guidance Counselor

GLOSSARY OF TERMS:

Agrónomo	intermediate level, technical undergraduate degree.
Aplazado	failure.
Aprobado	pass.
Asignatura	a subject studied.
Bachillerato	diploma awarded on completion of the business administration track in the diversified cycle.
Bachillerato Administración de Empresas Intermedias	diploma awarded on completion of the business administration track in the diversified cycle.
Bachillerato en Ciencias y Letras	diploma awarded on completion of the academic track in the diversified cycle.
Bachillerato en Ciencias y Técnicas	diploma awarded on completion of the two-year science and technical track in the diversified cycle.

Bachillerato en Promoción Social	diploma awarded on completion of the social service track in the diversified cycle.
Bachillerato Universitario	first undergraduate degree awarded on completion of a three or four year program, requiring 120 to 140 academic credits, similar to the US Bachelor's degree. Students may receive this degree on completion of three to four years of study in a licenciatura program.
Bueno	good.
Calificación	grade.
Carrera	major field of study.
Certificación de Educación Media	secondary school diploma.
Ciclo Común	first three years of secondary education.
Ciclo Diversificado	final two to three years of secondary education, students select one of nine tracks.
Dasónomo	intermediate level, technical undergraduate degree.
Director de Escuela Primaria	intermediate degree program certificate for the primary school director program.

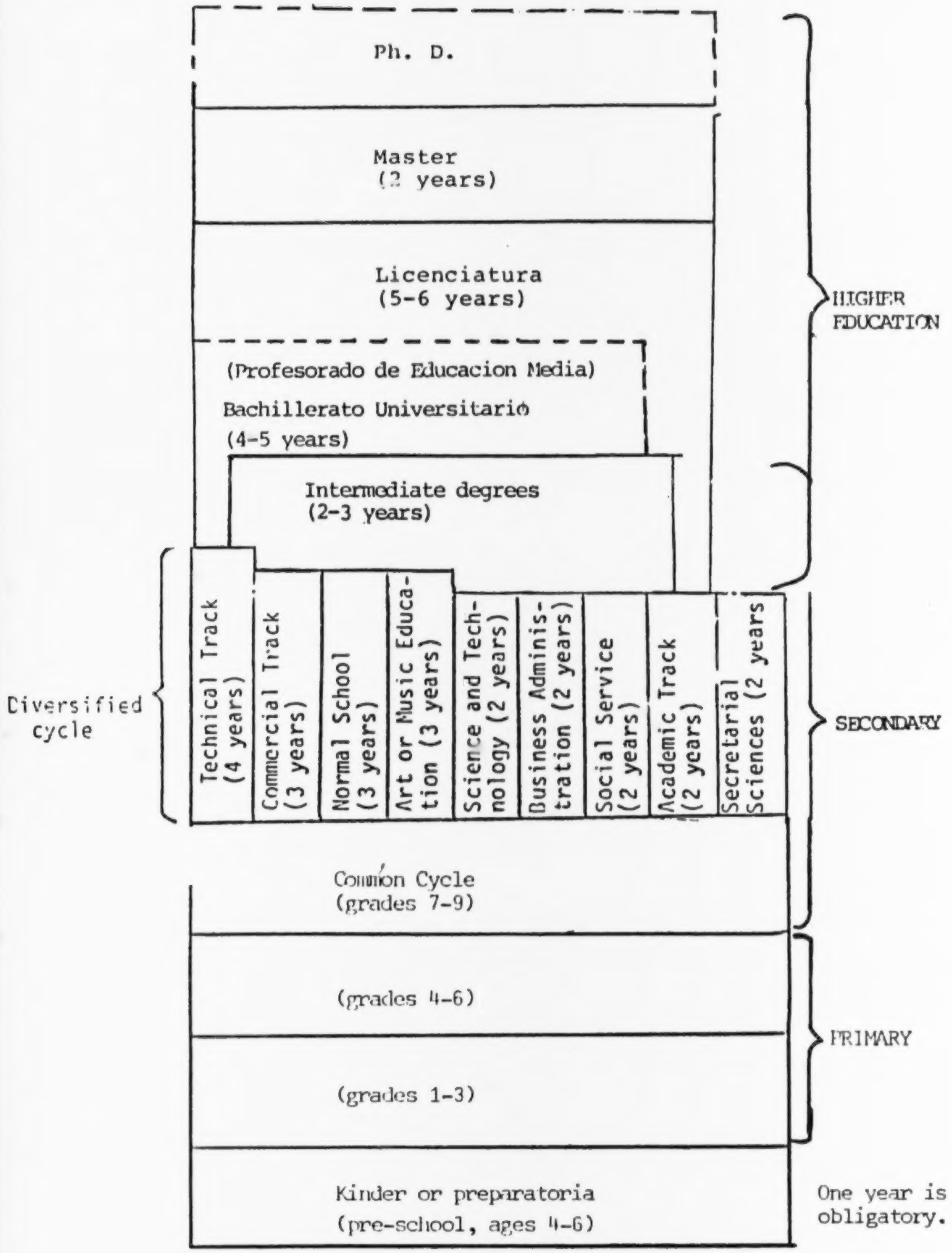
Doctor	title awarded to students who have successfully completed a licenciatura program in the fields of Medicine, Dentistry or Pharmacy.
Educación a Distancia	correspondence program.
Educación Comercial	commercial education track in the diversified cycle.
Educación Media	secondary education.
Educación Normal	normal school, diversified cycle.
Educación Técnica	technical track in the diversified cycle.
Examen de Recuperación	comprehensive make-up examination taken by students who have failed a course, giving the opportunity to pass.
Ingeniero	title awarded to students who have successfully completed a licenciatura program in Engineering.
Insuficiente	failure.
Kinder	kindergarten.
Licenciatura	undergraduate degree, usually representing five to six years of study, and roughly equivalent to the US Bachelor's degree.

Maestría	Master's degree.
Maestro de Educación Primaria	primary school teacher.
Muy Bueno	very good.
Perito	diploma awarded on completion of the diversified cycle for a two-year program.
Preparatoria	kindergarten.
Profesor	diploma awarded on completion of the normal school art or music education tracks in the diversified cycle which qualifies the student to teach at the primary level or in art or music education.
Profesorado	undergraduate certificate for partial completion of a degree program enabling students to teach their major field of study at the secondary level. The Profesorado degree is an undergraduate degree, similar to a US Bachelor's degree in Education and requires between 120 and 145 academic units.
Profesorado de Educación Media	secondary school teaching certificate.

Profesor de Educación Parvularia	intermediate degree program certificate for the pre-school teacher program.
Promedio	academic average.
Semestre	semester.
Sobresaliente	excellent.
Supervisor de Escuelas Primarias	intermediate degree program certificate for the primary school supervisor program.
Técnico	university level intermediate certificate, usually requiring two to three years of study.
Unidad Valorativa (UV)	credit hour.

EDUCATION LADDER

HONDURAS


Ph. D.
Master (2 years)
Licenciatura (5-6 years)
(Profesorado de Educacion Media)
Bachillerato Universitario
(4-5 years)
Intermediate degrees (2-3 years)
HIGHER EDUCATION
Technical Track (4 years)
Commercial Track (3 years)
Normal School (3 years)
Art or Music Education (3 years)
Science and Technology (2 years)
Business Administration (2 years)
Social Service (2 years)
Academic Track (2 years)
Secretarial Sciences (2 years
Diversified cycle
SECONDARY
Common Cycle (grades 7-9)
(grades 4-6)
(grades 1-3)
PRIMARY
Kinder or preparatoria
(pre-school, ages 4-6)
One year is obligatory.

COUNTRY EDUCATION PROFILE
NICARAGUA
1986

STUDENT PLACEMENT IN THE US UNIVERSITY SYSTEM: The quality of education in Nicaragua poses certain difficulties for US admissions officers. The curricula is steeped in politics, making it difficult to determine how much students have learned.

The American School is now the only private school remaining at the secondary level, all others have been incorporated into the government system.

The programs offered by all other schools are more or less the same.

At the university level, all degree programs follow specifications outlined by the National Council on Higher Education.

University level students participate in political activities which reduce the amount of time devoted to their studies.

Many students have a poor base in the English language or no English at all.

All medical school or health program students must give one year of service to the Nicaraguan government regardless of where their degree was earned. However, students enrolled in universities abroad are not required to complete the práctica de producción to earn their degree or have their studies revalidated.

Men between the ages of 18 and 24 are eligible for the draft, and cannot obtain exit visas for study abroad unless their army service has already been completed or they have an exemption.

Individuals seeking student visas must bring their I-20 to the US Embassy along with financial evidence proving they can cover the costs of their program.

Currently no funds are available from the Central Bank for study in the US. Funds for US studies were cancelled in 1984.

EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM BACKGROUND: Education in Nicaragua is mandatory through the six grades of the primary cycle. However, there are not enough teachers and facilities to handle the large numbers of students. Consequently, coverage is not complete at this level.

In 1981 the attrition rate after the first grade was approximately 50 percent.

Most students do not complete the third grade because children play an adult role in Nicaraguan society. Children are looked at for their production and contribution to the family income.

In recent years the illiteracy rate has been lowered, although it is not possible to obtain reliable statistics.

In 1984 the government attempted to introduce a new course in military instruction for students between the ages of eight and 14. Students had to enter the Asociación de Niños Sandinistas. Many felt this course would really be an indoctrination in Marxist-Leninist thought and thus resisted the initiation both of this course and a similar proposed camp program. The Association of Catholic School Parents (UNAFALPAC) stated that their children would not attend school if this program was initiated. The proposals were dropped.

Forty to 50 percent of the national budget supports the war in Nicaragua.

The universities need new resources, but do not have the funding to expand and build new facilities.

The universities face severe shortages. While enrollment has surged, tuition has been virtually eliminated. Soviet and Cuban programs of financial aid, visiting professors, research agreements, technical and faculty training, scholarships for study abroad and donations of library and laboratory materials, have resulted in an increased communist influence in Nicaragua's education sector.

In the five years since the Sandinista Revolution, university enrollment has almost doubled. Tuition fees are very low, about 136 Cordobas (US$4.86) per year at the Universidad Centroamericana.

Institutions face acute shortages of books and other materials. University administrators and faculty members claim shortages of textbooks, pencils, paper and audio-visual equipment.

Many of the shortages have been created by continuing guerrilla warfare.

Often, small groups of students share textbooks.

Journals and publications are available only for priority fields such as medicine.

In addition, a shortage of trained instructors has affected the quality of university programs.

Many members of the academic community have fled the country. The government also draws many qualified people away from the low paying universities. It has become increasingly difficult for the universities to find well-qualified professors who are politically acceptable.

About 30 per cent of the teachers in Nicaragua's universities are from other countries. Many Nicaraguan university instructors have only recently graduated from Licenciatura programs themselves. This has influenced the level of education. Many fourth and fifth year undergraduate level students teach first and second year courses as Alumnos Ayudantes. This is similar to the teaching assistants program in US universities, although in Nicaragua the students have not yet earned their undergraduate degrees.

A report issued by the Nicaraguan government in July last year stated that the Ministry of Education's budget grew 24 per cent from 1979 to 1983. The report also stated that most of the remaining problems the education sector is experiencing have resulted from the rapid population growth. The country's annual population growth rate is 3.3 percent, the highest in the region.

The government has identified Medicine, Engineering, Agronomy, Marine Science, Education, Food Science, and Veterinary Medicine as priority fields of study.

The educational system is also being streamlined.

The government plans to open a new Agricultural University as well, although funding is not yet available for this project.

The government has also moved to make university admission more selective by establishing quotas for each area of study.

Students are now selected on the basis of their high school transcripts (students must have a minimum grade point average of 60 for their last two years of secondary school), and entrance examination scores.

Each student must take an aptitude test, and list their three choices for major field of study. They are not always able to enroll in their first choice.

As part of the government's efforts to streamline the university system and avoid the duplication of majors, each university is to be responsible for certain areas. For example, the UCA is responsible for Humanities and Social Science programs, while the National University offers degree programs in the Natural Sciences.

Areas that are considered very high priority for national development are offered by more than one university.

This "new" system is not well-defined; consequently, the government has been indecisive changing curricula and switching major fields of study among the universities.

According to the 1984/85 Open Doors, 1,150 Nicaraguan students enrolled in US colleges and universities.

PRIMARY EDUCATION: Pre-primary education is a three-year program. Students in pre-primary programs are categorized by age. Students five years-of-age enter level 1, students six years of age enter level 2, and students seven years of age enter level 3. Traditionally, students are taught to read, write, add and substract during their pre-primary education.

The primary cycle includes grades one through six. Although education at this level is free and obligatory, mandatory attendance is not enforced. Students completing the primary cycle receive the Diploma de Educación Primaria.

Primary education is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education.

SECONDARY EDUCATION: The Ministry of Education is also responsible for secondary level education. This cycle includes five to six years of schooling and is offered in two cycles: the Basic Cycle (Ciclo Básico) which includes grades seven through nine, and the Diversified Cycle (Ciclo Diversificado) which includes grades ten through 12.

Courses in the basic cycle include Math, Spanish, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, Foreign Language, Physical Education, Music and Agriculture.

Students must have the diploma of completion of the Basic Cycle (Diploma de Curso Básico) to enter the Diversified Cycle secondary programs in which students follow a particular specification. The Diversified Cycle includes three tracks.

The academic track includes grades ten and eleven. The academic program offered during evening classes requires three years of study. The Normal School track includes grades ten to twelve, as does the Technical track.

Students completing the academic track receive a Bachillerato (Diploma del Curso Diversificado del Bachillerato en Ciencias, Letras y Filosofia). Courses in the academic track include Math, Physics, Chemistry or Biology, Spanish Literature, History and Geography, Sociology, Economics, Philosophy, and Foreign Language.

Students completing the technical track may receive a Bachillerato or the Técnico Especial, and students completing the Normal School track receive the Maestro de Educación Primaria (Primary School Teacher).

Each of these tracks enables students to enter university level programs in Nicaragua.

All schools at the secondary level must follow the Ministry of Education programs.

The schools offering the stronger programs are:

- American School (which offers a dual program following the Nicaraguan and the American curriculum, and is the only private school remaining in Nicaragua)
- Colegio Teresiano
- Colegio La Purísima
- Colegio Centroamerica
- Colegio Calasans
- Instituto Pedagógico La Salle

The American School follows the regular US curriculum in addition to the Nicaraguan system, and is accredited by the Southern Association. The American School curriculum includes two years of Spanish, two years of a foreign language (usually Geometry), Nicaraguan History and Geography, Economics, World History, Psychology, Sociology, Earth Science, Physical Science, Physics I and II, Chemistry, Biology, Modern and Current History, Physical Education, Practical Arts (usually typing), and one technical course to make students aware of the various technical areas of study available.

Students graduating from the academic track are probably better prepared to enter a US university than students graduating from the Normal School or Technical tracks.

Grading systems at the secondary level vary depending on the school. Some schools use a system based on a scale of 0-10 with 6 as the minimum passing grade, and other schools use a scale of 0-100 with 60 as the minimum passing grade. Some of the private secondary schools may provide the student's rank.

In general, a student graduating from the secondary level with a grade point average of 90 or above can be considered a serious and well-prepared student.

Secondary level students may take a make up examination (examen de retrasada) to pass a course in which they have received a failing grade. Students who have failed three courses must repeat the entire year.

The Instituto Técnico Nacional is a technical school located in Granada, and offers one to two year secondary level programs. Students completing these programs receive the Técnico certificate. Students attend this school on scholarships, and live at the school.

HIGHER EDUCATION: The National Council for Higher Education (Consejo Nacional de Estudios Superiores, CNES) was established in 1979 to plan, control and evaluate higher education programs.

The University rectors and administrators may not determine policy, but present recommendations to the CNES.

The universities are considered to have a large but restricted role in national development.

All universities in Nicaragua receive subsidies from the government. The universities are:

- -National University of Nicaragua (UNAN)
- -Universidad Centroamericana (UCA)
- -Universidad Politécnica
- -Nicaraguan University of Engineering (UNI).

Total enrollment for all Nicaraguan universities in 1985 was between 25,000 and 27,000. In 1984, 35,000 students were enrolled in the universities.

Degrees offered are the Licenciatura and Master's degrees. The Licenciatura generally requires five years of study. A thesis is normally required although for some fields of study a professional seminar and additional courses take the place of the thesis.

Students must also fulfill "formación" requirements for each field of study. This is a research project in an area vital to development, and can be a long or short-term project. Most students conduct theoretical rather than practical research projects.

The language of instruction in all universities is Spanish.

University entrance requirements are the same for all schools and are determined by the National Council for Higher Education. Students must have a secondary school certificate to gain admission to a Nicaraguan university. Admission is granted to students who have a Bachillerato (high school diploma), Maestro de Educación Primaria (primary school teaching certificate), Bachillerato Comercial (secondary level accounting or secretarial program) or Bachillerato Técnico. All are considered the equivalent of a high school diploma. Students applying to university programs must also have a minimum grade point average of 60 (or 6.0) for their last two years of high school.

The National Council for Higher Education has set quotas for the number of students who can enroll in certain majors, for example those that are saturated or are not required for national development plans such as Law, Psychology or Business Administration.

Nicaraguan students are assigned a major field of study and do not necessarily study in the area of their choice. The quotas established for the various fields of study differ depending on the region of the country. Placement is based on the results of an entrance examination which tests students' knowledge of Spanish, Math, and Social Science. Students with high passing scores will be placed in more competitive fields, such as Electronics.

Students must complete university programs in a specified amount of time to help the national development. A maximum of six years is permitted for students to complete undergraduate programs. Since Nicaraguan universities cannot accommodate the large number of students, some programs are available in evening sessions rather than, or in addition to, daytime sessions. Students enrolled in evening programs must complete their degree requirements in six years.

Post-graduate programs are offered in 19 areas. Specialty programs require two to three years of study and grant the Diplomado. Students may enter Master's degree or Diplomado programs on completion of the Licenciatura.

Nicaraguan universities generally use a grading scale of 0-100 with 60 as the minimum passing grade as follows:

90 - 100	A	Excellent
80 - 89	B	Very Good
70 - 79	C	Good
60 - 69	D	Satisfactory

Grades are awarded based on two partial examinations and one final examination. Class participation, the "práctica de producción", and homework assignments are also considered in awarding grades. The "práctica de producción" is for first year students and involves work in the harvesting of cotton or sugar cane. Second year students are required to work in the interior of the country for a specified period of time. If students do not complete these requirements, they cannot continue to the next year of their program.

In the early 1980's, the grading scale was lowered in order to keep students in the universities' programs.

Nicaraguan universities do not use a system of credits or electives, but use the Block system based on the Cuban model. In this system, specific courses are required for each block (similar to a semester). Students who fail a course in one block must repeat that course during the next block, in addition to the courses required for the preceding block. Consequently, if a student fails two courses he will take the five required courses for the next block and repeat the two courses that were failed in the previous block. The Nicaraguan government uses this system to let students complete their programs as quickly as possible to help national development.

Students receive one opportunity to pass a course in which they have received a failing grade by taking a make up examination (examen de retrasada) before the next block begins. Failures do not appear on the student's transcript. The grade that appears on the transcript is that of the make up examination. Whether or not a student has passed a course by taking a make up exam can be determined by looking at the date recorded for the course. If the date is different than that listed for other courses required for the same block, a make up exam was presented.

No flexibility is permitted in this system.

Students take five required courses in each block and have no opportunity for elective courses.

Attendance is required and is taken at the beginning of each class.

The block system serves two purposes. It eliminates the possibility of professional students, and it allows the government to plan when required human resources will be available.

Because university level study in Nicaragua is political in nature, it is difficult to determine how much Nicaraguan students learn.

The academic year varies depending on the harvest. Normally, the academic year extends from March to November, with the first block extending from March to July and the second from August to November.

The academic year is supposed to begin in February, but may begin later depending on the time required to harvest crops. This affects the termination of the school year as well, for example, the 1984 school year ended in December. The required "práctica de producción" or harvest also shortens the school year.

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL DEGREE PROGRAMS: Since the Sandinista revolution, greater emphasis has been placed on terminal education and/or education cycles that prepare students for immediate employment, with the option of continuing their education at a later date. More information about the country's development needs in technical areas is being made available to students to create an awareness of the country's needs and the need for more people trained in technical areas.

Recent developments in the technical centers have been in the areas of Marine Science and Health.

Ten technical centers offer intermediate level degrees. Four are Escuelas Técnicas, which are similar to community colleges in the US.

The Bachillerato is required for admission to the technical centers. These schools offer the Técnicas Medias degree which requires two to three years of study. It should be noted that this is an intermediate degree, while the Tecnico Especial is a secondary level Bachillerato which is accepted for university entrance.

Students graduating with the Técnicas Medias degrees may transfer into university level programs only in certain fields of study. The procedure for transferring credits earned in intermediate level programs to Licenciatura programs is currently being reorganized.

Training for nurses has been upgraded to require an intermediate degree rather than a secondary school diploma. Nursing programs are considered on a level between the secondary and university levels. A secondary school diploma is required for entrance to the nursing program. The Nursing program is a three-year intermediate level program, and students graduating from this course earn the title "Enfermera". A six-month program is also available for nursing assistants (auxiliar).

Two agriculture schools also offer intermediate programs considered on a level between the secondary and university levels. The agriculture schools offer three year programs awarding the "Agrónomo" degree. These are the Escuela Internacional de Agricultura in Rivas, and the Escuela Agrícola Estatal Francisco Luis Espinosa. Both schools follow standard programs are are no longer private but are subsidized by the government.

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua (UNAN)

The UNAN is the National University, and has campuses in three cities: Managua, Leon and Estelle. Each campus offers studies in different fields.

The UNAN Managua offers majors in the fields of Economics and Education, and offers a five-year secondary level teacher training program which awards the Maestría de Educación Media. English courses are offered at the National University as Normal School courses.

The UNAN Leon offers Natural Science fields, and the Medical School at this campus is the oldest and biggest in Nicaragua. The UNAN Managua also offers a Medical program as an extension of the Medical School in Leon. Students may begin their studies in Managua and then transfer to the Leon campus. The UNAN Leon also offers programs in Pharmacology and Ontology.

The National University at Estelle offers programs in Mathematics.

The National University's Master's degree programs are also delegated to specific campuses.

The UNAN Managua offers the Master's degree in Epidemiology and in Public Health Administration, and the UNAN Leon offers a Master's degree program in Ecology (Control Integrado de Plagas).

A new Master's degree program in Sanitation Engineering will be offered in 1986.

Other programs are currently in the planning stage.

Universidad Centroamericana (UCA)

The UCA located in Managua, is a private university incorporated into the public system, and receives 90 per cent of its budget from the government.

The UCA offers two degree programs, the Licenciatura and Master's degrees.

The Licenciatura programs normally require five years of study and a thesis. Some fields of study require a professional seminar and additional courses (for an additional year of study) in lieu of the thesis. The duration of the Licenciatura and the specific requirements depend on the field of study. For example, the Licenciatura in Social Work is a four-year program. Students enrolled in this major during the evening sessions require more than four years to complete the program, since the library facilities are not available during evening hours.

The Licenciatura in Business Administration requires a comprehensive examination (examen de grado) in place of the thesis.

In 1985 the UCA's total enrollment was 3,988 with approximately two-thirds of the student body attending night classes. Women comprise 70 percent of the student body. This is due to two factors: men must enter the military service between the ages of 18 to 24, and also, the fields of study offered by the UCA are fields traditionally attended by women. The UCA also lost a significant portion of its male student population when the engineering university opened in 1984.

The UCA's largest enrollment is in the field of Marine Sciences, which has an enrollment of 1,311 students. The Humanities faculty has an enrollment of 1,017 students.

Students must have a secondary school certificate to gain admission to any of the UCA's programs. General courses in Nicaraguan History, Math and Spanish are required as first year general courses as the UCA finds many students are not well-prepared for university level programs.

The English program offered by the UCA is offered as a complement to different disciplines. Most students enrolled in English courses are studying at the basic and intermediate levels.

The UCA no longer has regional centers, but conducts projects in different parts of the country.

Universidad Nicaraguense de Ingenieria (UNI)

The UNI is the public university responsible for engineering programs opened in 1984, and is located in Managua.

Instituto Centroamericano de Administración de Empresas (INCAE)

Located in Managua, INCAE no longer offers a Master's degree in Business Administration. Students attend INCAE's Managua campus for the first year only, and may continue the program at the Costa Rica campus.

Students completing the first year of the program in Managua receive the "Administración Funcionario" diploma (PAF).

STUDENT LOANS: EDUCREDITO offers loans for study in-country. Students may obtain 3,000 Cordobas (US$107.14) per month, plus fees for books.

Many students require financial assistance as the cost of living in Managua and transportation costs are very high.

Loans are no longer available for study in the US.

An EDUCREDITO loan program for study in the US was terminated in 1985. This program covered costs of tuition, room and board. Students were required to pay back their loans at the official exchange rate. If the student remained in Nicaragua two times as long as the period of study in the US, 90 per cent of the loan was waived as an incentive for students to return. Ten students participated in this program.

The National Council for Higher Education offers a scholarship program.

Universities offer very few scholarships and these are generally available only for study at the graduate level.

MAIN IN-COUNTRY SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON US EDUCATION:

USIS
American Embassy
American School

GLOSSARY OF TERMS:

Agrónomo	intermediate level degree awarded to students completing the three-year program offered by the agriculture schools.

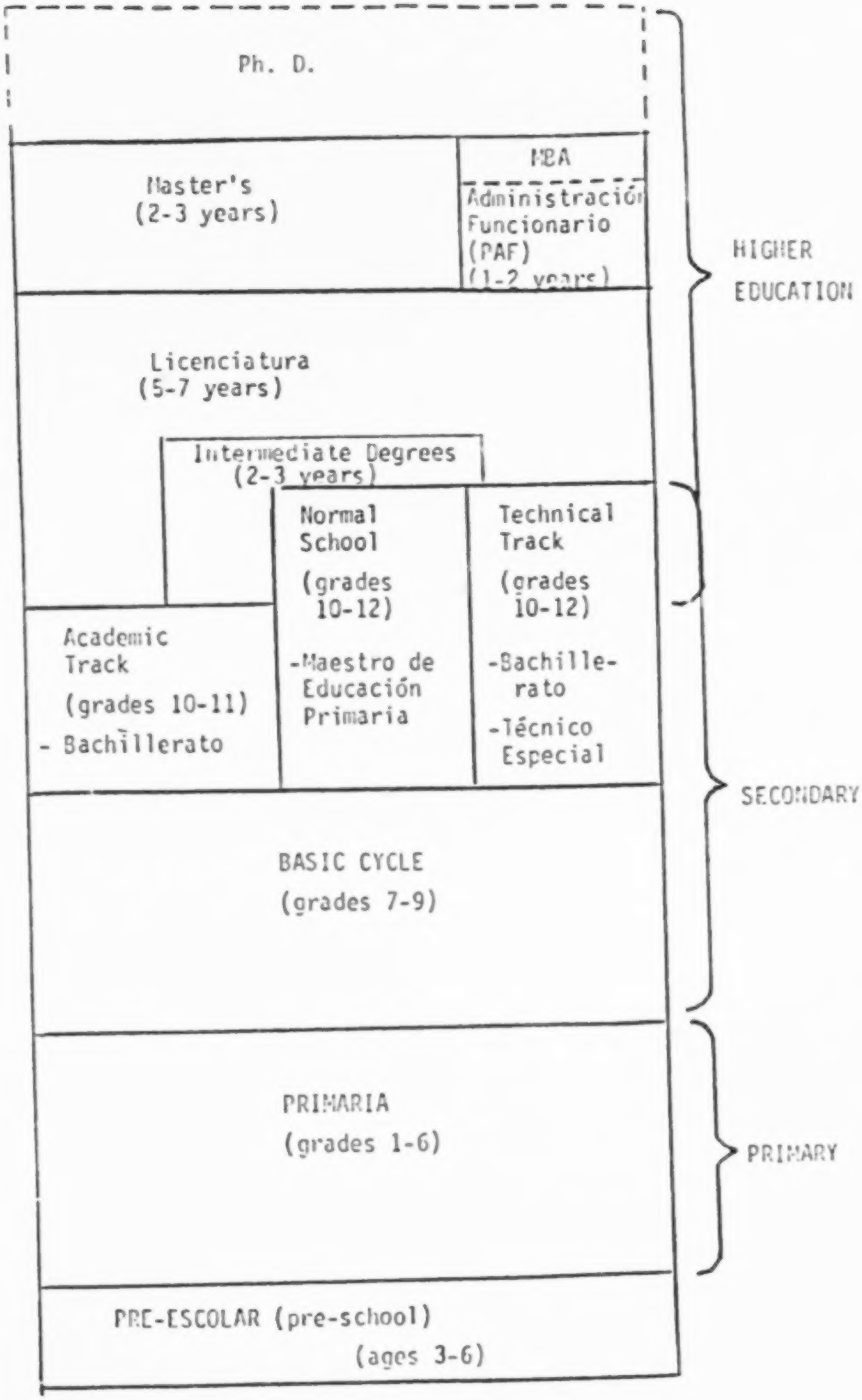
Alumnos Ayudantes	similar to Teaching Assistants in the US, fourth and fifth year Licenciatura students teach first and second year undergraduate classes.
Bachillerato Comercial	high school diploma awarded on completion of the Diversified Cycle Technical track Accounting or Secretarial program. This diploma enables students to enter university level programs.
Bachillerato Técnico	high school diploma awarded on completion of the Diversified Cycle Technical track. This diploma enables students to enter university level programs.
Ciclo Básico	first cycle of secondary school, includes grades seven through nine.
Ciclo Diversificado	second cycle of secondary school, includes grades ten through twelve. Students follow one of three tracks: Academic, Technical or Normal School.
Diploma de Curso Básico	diploma of completion of the Basic Cycle, required for entrance to one of the tracks in the Diversified Cycle.
Diploma del Curso Diversificado del Bachillerato en Ciencias, Letras y Filosofía	high school diploma awarded on completion of the academic track in the Diversified Cycle. This diploma enables students to enter university level programs.
Diploma de Educación Primaria	primary school certificate.
Diplomado	graduate level specialization program degree usually requiring two to three years of study.

Educación Media	secondary level education.
Enfermera	title awarded to students completing the three-year intermediate level nursing program.
Enfermera Auxiliar	title awarded to students completing the six-month nursing assistant program offered at the intermediate level.
Examen de Grado	comprehensive examination.
Examen de Retrasada	make up examination allowing students to pass a course in which they have received a failing grade.
Formación	required research project in an area considered vital to national development. This can be a long or short-term project, and is generally of a theoretical rather than practical emphasis.
Licenciatura	undergraduate level degree roughly equivalent to the Bachelor's degree in the US, generally requiring five years of study and a thesis or professional seminar.
Maestría	Master's degree.
Maestría de Educación Media	university degree awarded on completion of the five-year secondary level teacher training program.
Maestro de Educación Primaria	high school diploma awarded on completion of the Diversified Cycle Normal School track. This diploma enables students to enter university level programs.

Práctica de Producción	requirement for first year university students to work in the harvesting of cotton or sugar cane.
Técnicas Medias	intermediate level degree requiring two to three years of study. This degree enables students to transfer into Licenciatura programs only in certain fields of study.
Técnico Especial	high school diploma awarded on completion of a program in the Diversified Cycle Technical track. This diploma enables students to enter university level programs.

EDUCATION LADDER

NICARAGUA


Ph. D.
Master's (2-3 years)
MBA
Administració Funcionario (PAF) (1-2 years)
Licenciatura (5-7 years)
Intermediate Degrees (2-3 years)
Normal School (grades 10-12)
-Maestro de Educación Primaria
Technical Track (grades 10-12)
-Bachillerato
-Técnico Especial
Academic Track (grades 10-11)
- Bachillerato
BASIC CYCLE (grades 7-9)
PRIMARIA (grades 1-6)
PRE-ESCOLAR (pre-school) (ages 3-6)
HIGHER EDUCATION
SECONDARY
PRIMARY

COUNTRY EDUCATION PROFILE
PANAMA
1986

STUDENT PLACEMENT IN THE US UNIVERSITY SYSTEM: The *Licenciatura* degree is considered the equivalent of the US Bachelor's degree. Students seeking revalidation of undergraduate studies abroad in technical areas such as engineering, may experience problems with the number of credits taken in their major field of study, as the programs offered by Panamanian universities do not include many electives. Students are often not aware of this, and may sometimes be required to study an extra semester or year in Panama to receive revalidation.

Students should be advised to cover the courses required for revalidation during their program of study in the US or to take an extra semester of courses to meet the revalidation requirements.

The *Licenciatura* degree is the minimum requirement for admission to graduate and professional school degree programs in Panama. However, the exact placement level and possible graduate transfer credit, particularly for those who enter graduate programs in the US with a five or six year *Licenciatura* (as full-time students) should be determined on a case-by-case basis and in accordance with the US graduate institution's policies and procedures.

Panamanian students may experience initial difficulties with the English language, especially in reading and writing. Some students may require additional English courses at the start of their US university careers.

Admissions officers should be aware that grade point averages of B+ or higher (at least a 3.5) generally indicate top students. The SAT or the Spanish equivalent (if the student's English is poor) should be requested. The TOEFL should be requested of students who did not take intensive English training before beginning university studies. In addition, letters of recommendation may be submitted in Spanish with a certified official translation.

EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM BACKGROUND: In an attempt to better serve the social and economic needs of the country, Panama has improved its educational system in a variety of ways.

An educational reform initiated in 1975 increased compulsory education from six to nine years.

The new curricula were adjusted to make it possible for students to receive dual preparation for university and professional entrance upon graduation.

A national commission (Comisión Coordinadora de Educación Nacional) comprised of representatives from the Ministry of Education and primary and secondary level institutions, is currently reviewing the public educational system to recommend improvements.

The changes currently being considered are: 1) the reduction of primary education to a five year cycle, to allow direct entry into a commercial or technical program; 2) the expansion of the primary cycle to grade nine, with all grades being compulsory; 3) the maintenance of the primary cycle, and 4) the revision of the first cycle at the secondary level to allow parity with a junior high program.

Although the literacy rate in Panama is at 85 per cent, the availability and accessibility to education is not equal. Until 1980, secondary and higher education was available only in urban areas. Primary education was available to nearly all the rural areas.

In 1984 the Ministry of Education's budget was divided as follows: 54.57 percent for pre-primary and primary levels, 35.58 percent for secondary, professional and technical levels, and 9.58 percent for higher education.

According to the 1983-1984 edition of Open Doors, 1,490 Panamanian students studied in US universities or colleges. This number increased to 1,570 for the 1984-1985 academic year.

PRIMARY EDUCATION: Education is compulsory for the six years of the primary level or between the ages of six and twelve. Pre-primary or kinder education is available to children under six years-of-age. Upon completion of the primary school cycle, students receive their Certificado de Primaria. Children under age 15 may be legally employed but must have completed their primary schooling.

Rural enrollments at this level have increased with the rural expansion of school facilities. A high percentage of the rural school units are located in remote areas where a single teacher conducts classes in a school offering a few grades. Some of these remote frontier units do not offer children the full curriculum of six primary grades.

Both private and public schools observe a standard curriculum designed by the Ministry of Education.

The curriculum includes study in fields such as Agriculture, Art, Music, Manual Arts and Home Economics, as well as general studies in Spanish, Science Mathematics, Social Studies and Religion.

English language studies are included in the upper grades in the public schools but private schools may include English, Italian and/or French, as well as computer based education.

Although private school enrollment at this level is considerably smaller than in the public schools, the private system has considerable social significance.

Until 1984 the total enrollment of students at all levels in private schools was 70,000. Some charity schooling is offered by religious orders at private schools, but most of the students are children of the well-to-do.

Most private school students complete their studies at this level, having completed a secondary school associated with the primary unit.

In many instances, their higher education is taken in prestigious universities abroad.

A new experimental bilingual school began in 1984 in the former Canal Zone to respond to the great need for English language proficiency in Panama. Classes are conducted from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. with transportation available for pre-school, kindergarten, first and second graders.

SECONDARY EDUCATION: The six years of secondary school are divided into two cycles of three years each.

The first cycle is general and offers a standard curriculum that includes Spanish, Social Studies, Religion, Math, Science, English, Art and Music.

The second cycle consists of six tracks: an academic track with three specializations, a commercial track, an industrial track, an agricultural track, a normal school and a vocational track. Depending on the specialization they have chosen, students completing the academic track receive one of three diplomas, a Bachillerato en Ciencias (Science), a Bachillerato en Letras (Literature), or the Bachillerato en Ciencias y Letras.

Vocational track students may end their high school studies after two years to enter the job market, or may continue to a third year to obtain their Bachillerato.

Secondary level technical/vocational, artes or oficios programs are offered by the Institutos Profesionales y Técnicos.

The Escuela Normal de Santiago prepares primary school teachers in normal school courses at the upper secondary level. The course is open to those who have completed the lower cycle and includes practice teaching in the second and third years.

Programs for prospective teachers are offered by several public and private schools.

Students may enter the normal school program at the beginning of the first cycle or at the beginning of the second cycle.

The normal school diplomas are titled either Maestra de Educación Primaria (Primary School Teacher) or Maestra de Educación para el Hogar (Home Economics Teacher). Both diplomas enable students to continue to university level studies.

The curriculum of vocational or technical secondary schools includes study in fields such as electricity, construction, plumbing, refrigeration, air conditioning, mechanics, dressmaking and computer programming. In general, vocational schooling is less popular than academic training because teachers are often poorly trained and facilities are inadequate.

Some of the Catholic private schools, such as La Salle, offer a three-year Perito program in the commercial track. Students may continue secondary studies to receive their Bachillerato after completing this program.

The Colegio San Agustín also offers this option. It also offers some secondary level business schools, although students graduating from the public school commercial program generally do not continue to university level studies.

Although public and private schools at this level have similar roles, there are disadvantages to the public school system.

Enrollment in the public schools is larger, consequently they cannot offer the individual attention that is offered by the private schools.

In many private high schools the English program is much more intense and complete than the public system. Students attending such private schools as Instituto Panamericano, La Salle, Las Esclavas, Cristóbal Rodriguez and Instituto Alberto Einstein, learn about computer programming and word processing. None of the public secondary schools have incorporated such high technology classes.

Private schools also tend to require more material and more courses with English textbooks in addition to the basic curriculum authorized by the Ministry of Education. They usually have better facilities and the teachers often have higher qualifications. Consequently, these private school students are better equipped for higher education in and out of Panama and usually receive the best opportunities.

The public schools offering particularly strong curriculum are:

Fermín Naudeau
Instituto Militar
Instituto Nacional
Instituto Bolívar (for the commercial track)
Escuela José Dolores Moscote
Colegio Angel Bravo (in Colon)
Escuela Angel María Herrera
Escuela Rodolfo Chiari (in Cocle)

Escuela José Daniel Crespo (in Herrera)
Escuela Manuel Tejada Roca (in Los Santos)
Escuela Felix Olivares
Secundaria Daniel Crespo (in Chiriqui)
Instituto Urraca (in Veraguas)

Most secondary level schools use a grading scale of 0-5 with 3 as the minimum passing grade. A grade of 5 is equivalent to a grade of 100 and is considered Excellent. A grade of 4 is equivalent to a grade of 90 and is considered Good. A grade of 3 is equivalent to a grade of 80 and is considered Average. A grade of 2.9 or lower is a Failing grade. High school transcripts are usually obtained at the registrar's office upon request.

Admission to a university requires the Bachillerato (high school diploma) awarded upon completion of the upper cycle academic track.

Canal Area: In the Canal Area the DOD system offers education at the Elementary and High School levels. English is the language of instruction with some courses such as "The History of U.S.-Panama Relations" offered in Spanish. Dependents and employees of the US PanCanal Co., the military, the US Department of Defense, and US citizens working in the Republic, may attend these schools.

HIGHER EDUCATION: Panama has two public universities and one private university. The public higher education institutions are the University of Panama (UP) and the Universidad Tecnológica de Panama (UTP). The private university is the Universidad Santa María La Antigua (USMA).

The language of instruction in all schools is Spanish.

Degrees offered in Panama are the Técnico (intermediate level), Licenciatura (equivalent to the Bachelor's degree), and the Maestría (Master's degree).

In May 1984 the University of Panama conducted a workshop to evaluate degrees granted from universities abroad. The objective of the seminar was to discuss accreditation policies abroad and to analyze and compare the systems in order to maintain a high quality of standards at Panamanian universities.

Students generally obtain university transcripts in one to three months at the university's Secretary-General office.

University of Panama (UP)

The University of Panama (UP) is a public institution founded in 1935, and is located in Panama City. Degrees offered are the Técnico Licenciatura and Master's.

In the first semester of 1983 the UP's total enrollment at the Panama City campus was 23,059. Total enrollment in the five regional centers (Azuero in Chitre, Cocle in Penonome, Colon in Colon, Chiriqui in David, and Veraguas in Santiago) was 8,254. Enrollment at the three educational centers (Bocas del Toro in Changuinola, La Chorrera in Chorrera and Las Tablas in Las Tablas) was 896.

Admission to the UP is open to all students who have earned a high school diploma. Each school within the university specifies the type of secondary diploma required.

All applicants must enroll in a six week course that is administered by the University. Some schools offer three basic entrance examinations: a psychological test, a pre-admission exam and a test of general knowledge. These examinations are administered by the school to which the student has applied.

Most Panamanian students work and study part-time. Students enrolled on a part-time basis take three to four courses per semester, while students enrolled on a full-time basis usually take seven courses per semester.

Full-time status requires a minimum of fifteen credit hours per semester.

Students may audit courses without complying with the admissions requirements. No academic credit or grade is recorded for students who audit a course.

Only the School of Philosophy, Letters and Education requires the completion of a general studies program. Other schools require the completion of certain general studies courses rather than an entire program.

The UP reviewed several proposals concerning a general studies program requirements for incoming students and implemented the new program in 1984. The general studies program of the School of Philosophy, Letters and Education includes 42 credits divided among required courses, a foreign language and electives. The program is designed to provide students with a comprehensive background in the Arts and Humanities, Geography, History, Mathematics, the Sciences and Panamanian Culture.

The Licenciatura is the professional degree awarded to UP students who complete four and five year programs, which require between 146 and 262 credits. Most programs are offered both during daytime and evening sessions.

A thesis project is required of all licenciatura candidates.

The UP also offers several non-licenciatura programs, which provide specialized training in select fields, such as Applied Arts. Non-licenciatura programs offer the Técnico degree and require one to three years of study (two to six semesters) with 34 to 128 credits, depending on the program.

The UP offers Master's degree programs in the areas of Mathematics, Medicine and Education through the university's departments and the Instituto Centroamericano de Administración y Supervisión de la Educación (Central Americal Institute for Administration and Supervision of Education - ICASE).

The ICASE was created by the Central American Republics' Ministries of Education as a center for research, assistance and studies in the field of education.

The Institute supports the development and transformation of education in Panama and throughout Latin America.

Students participating in the Master's degree program in the Development of Educational Systems with emphasis in Supervision and Curriculum are selected by the university's Graduate and Research Programs Office.

Panamanian candidates are nominated by the Ministry of Education, the University of Panama, the Panamanian Institute for the Handicapped, and the Institute for the Formation and Development of Human Resources (IFARHU).

Students seeking admission to the Master's degree programs must have a licenciatura or its equivalent and a minimum grade point average of 1.5/3.0 in their previous university studies. Applicants must also meet the specific admission requirements of the school to which they apply.

Students in the Master's degree programs must maintain at least a 1.75 grade point average. Graduate students may take no more than 12 credits per semester, and must complete the programs within four years.

A thesis project and second language are required for all Master's degree candidates.

The Master's degree programs require between 52 and 57 credits, depending on the field of study.

Graduate programs are offered to students in Nursing, International Business, Higher Education and Public Management. Admission requirements for these courses are the same as those for the Master's degree programs. The courses require between 22 and 37 academic credits, depending on the program. A certificate is awarded on completion of the program.

The UP uses a letter grading system based on a scale of A-F, with D as the minimum passing grade. The equivalent grade point system is based on three points.

Grade	Points	Equivalent
91-100	3	A
81-90	2	B
71-80	1	C
61-70	0	D
0-60	0	F

Students may repeat courses in which they earn a "D" to raise their grade point average. Students receiving a failing grade may also repeat the course. A minimum 1.0 grade point average is required for graduation. Also students must receive at least a "C" in each course in their area of specialty.

Students finishing técnico or licenciatura programs with a grade point average of 2.5 or higher graduate with honors. The UP honor society is called "Sigma Lambda".

The UP's academic calendar is divided into two 16-week semesters and a ten-week summer session. The semesters are divided by a short vacation period. The academic year begins in late April and ends in mid-December. The summer session begins in January and ends in April.

The UP observes the following holidays: Carnival (Mardi Gras with one day duration), Holy Week (two days), May 1, October 10-11, November 3-4, November 10, November 28 and December 8.

Classes are conducted in daytime and evening sessions.

The UP's five regional centers operate as decentralized units and offer many of the degree and technical programs offered at the Panama City campus. The centers are located in the following places: Azuero in Chitre; Colón in Colón; Veraguas in Santiago; Coclé in Penonomé and Chiriquí in David.

The university's three educational centers Bocas del Toro, Darien, and Chorrera offer students outside of Panama City the opportunity to begin licenciatura and técnico programs. Students at these three centers must transfer to another UP campus to complete their programs.

Universidad Tecnológica de Panama (UTP)

The UTP is a public institution and is the Panamanian center for higher education in engineering and technology.

Degrees are offered at the Técnico (intermediate), Licenciatura (equivalent to the Bachelor's degree) and Master's levels.

UTP began as a School of Engineering at the University of Panama (National University) in 1935. The UTP's main campus is in Panama City. Seven regional centers are located throughout the country: Bocas del Toro in Changuinola, Azuero in Los Santos, Coclé in Penonomé, Chorrera in Chorrera, Chiriquí in David, Colón in Colón and Veraguas in Santiago.

Enrollment in the first semester of 1983 was 4,956 at the Panama City campus and 2,042 in the regional centers.

Admission is granted to any student holding a diploma from a five or six year secondary level program.

Applicants must also pass the Capacitación and Preparatoria courses (basic requirements) before being admitted to any of the university's degree programs. A placement examination is given each year before the start of the term. This exam places students of the same ability in two capacitación courses: Mathematics and Algebra I.

Students must also attend a seminar on "Introduction to University Life".

Técnico degrees are normally obtained in one-and-one-half to three-and-one-half years depending on the field of study. Students working towards their técnico degree usually work full time and attend night school. Técnico programs require between

42 to 131 academic credits, depending on the field of study.

This degree provides professional training in diverse areas of engineering.

During the program, students receive hands-on training in the planning, production, execution and service aspects of their field of study.

Students graduating as técnicos may immediately pass into only one licenciatura program, the Technology program. Técnicos interested in entering any other licenciatura program must meet department requirements and obtain the necessary extra credits.

A thesis is required only for the técnico programs in Systems Analysis and Programming. The técnico programs and credits are as follows:

Program	Credits
Drafting	65
Electricity	97
Electronics	109
Geology	110
Industrial Mechanics	131
Industrial Technology	114
Irrigation and Drainage	115
Ports	91
Roads	42
Sanitation	124
Structures	98
Systems Analysis and Programming	122
Topography	79

The licenciatura is a professional degree qualifying graduates to enter a profession.

UTP students must complete between 210 and 220 credits and a thesis project to earn this degree.

Licenciatura programs include labs, visits to construction or engineering-related work sites, access to current materials and equipment and comprehensive classroom studies.

The average duration of a licenciatura program is five academic years plus summer sessions.

To provide a comprehensive program, the UTP also offers courses in Administration, Accounting, Social and Economic Development, Law, Language and Human Relations.

The UTP offers a Master's degree program in the Basic Sciences of Engineering. This program is designed for engineers from any field who are interested in an engineering education.

The Master's program requires two semesters and one summer session of study to receive 33 credits.

The UTP grading system is the same as the University of Panama.

The UTP's academic year is divided into two 16-week semesters and a 10 week summer session.

Each semester has a two-week final examination period. The semesters are divided by a short vacation. The academic year begins in early April and ends in mid-December. Summer session begins in January and ends in March. The UTP observes the same holidays as the University of Panama.

The regional centers are decentralized units which design their own programs to meet community needs.

The UTP allows transfer within its system. Field work in such areas as Irrigation and Drainage may vary according to the area's geography.

The regional centers are small, and each center's director must monitor students needs to determine programs and courses.

Degree programs offered by the regional centers are the Técnico and Licenciatura.

In some cases only the first two years of a licenciatura program are offered, and students must attend the main campus to receive their degree.

Universidad Santa María La Antigua (USMA)

The USMA is a non-profit Catholic institution founded in 1965.

The degrees offered are the Técnico (intermediate), Licenciatura (equivalent to the Bachelor's degree) and Master's degrees.

The USMA's main campus is located on the outskirts of Panama City and extension centers are located in the cities of Colón and David.

In the 1983 academic year a total of 4,200 students were enrolled in the degree programs at the main campus and 1,003 students were enrolled in the extension centers.

Entrance to the degree programs is based on an open admissions policy to all students who have a secondary school diploma.

In 1971 the USMA adopted its Plan de Estudios Generales (PEG) to provide students with a comprehensive background in a wide variety of subjects. Students are required to take 36 credit hours in 12 liberal arts courses including a course entitled Panama in the American World, two courses in Spanish and Bibliographical Studies, and one course in Religion. The remaining eight courses are chosen as electives from three areas - Mathematics and Natural Sciences, Social Sciences or Humanities.

Each student's major field of study will designate the areas from which PEG electives are chosen. All students must comply with the PEG's requirements in order to graduate.

The USMA also offers a series of programs which provide specialized training in select fields. These programs are not as long as the licenciatura programs and meet specific needs in Panamanian society and the job market.

The following is a list of requirements for USMA special programs:

Programs	Credits	English
Bank Administration (3 yrs.)	88	*
Basic Administration (3 yrs.)	108	*
Bilingual Executive Secretary (3 yrs.)	127	*
Insurance Administration (3 yrs.)	97	
Religious Education (3 yrs.)	93	
Secretarial Sciences Education (4 yrs.)	174	*

*English Required.

The Licenciatura is a professional degree qualifying the graduate to enter his profession.

Students at the USMA are required to complete between 146 and 224 credit hours as well as a thesis project to earn a licenciatura.

The average duration of a licenciatura program is four to five years.

Some programs require attendance during summer session.

Certain programs are offered only during the day, others only during the evening session, while some are offered during both sessions.

The evening Law and Political Science and Theology programs are the only six-year degrees.

Some programs have an English requirement which varies according to the program's needs.

The following is a list of requirements for licenciatura programs at the USMA:

Degree Programs	Credits	English
Day School, 4 yrs		
Interior Design	137	*
Social Communication	174	
Sociology	164	*
Day School, 5 yrs		
Accounting	177	
Administrative Industrial Engineering	213	*
Business Administration	177	
Civil Engineering	214	*
Electrical Engineering	224	*
Finance	170	
Law and Political Science	200	
Office and Secretarial Administration	162	*
Psychology	184	
Night School, 4 yrs		
Computer Science	147	*
Philosophy, Ethics and Religion	146	*
Tourism	150	*
Night School, 5 yrs		
Accounting	177	
Administrative Industrial Engineering	213	*
Architecture	213	
Business Administration	177	
Civil Engineering	214	*
Electrical Engineering	224	*
Finance	170	

Degree Programs	Credits	English
Night School, 6 yrs		
Law and Political Science	200	
Theology	211	*

*English Required

Any student who receives a licenciatura may earn a teaching degree by passing 24 credits of education courses or one-and-one half complete semesters. Required courses include: Adolescent Psychology, Methodology, Mental Hygiene, Philosophy of Education, and Educational Evaluation.

The Master's degree granted at the USMA is equivalent to that of US universities and is considered a useful step in reaching higher levels of administration and management in both the public and private sectors.

Master's degree programs are available in Business Administration, Economic Engineering and Industrial Administration.

The Master's degree programs require between 49 and 52 academic credits including thesis credits. This is normally two complete academic years of study.

Applicants to the Master's degree program in Business Administration, Economic Engineering and Industrial Administration should have at least a 1.5 grade point average and a licenciatura or its equivalent from an accredited university.

In all its degree programs, the USMA uses a letter grading system with 100 as the maximum and 60 as the minimum passing grades. A grade of 91-100 is equivalent to an A and is awarded 4 grade points. A grade of 81-90 is equivalent to a B and is awarded 3 grade points. A grade of 71-80 is equivalent to a C and is awarded 2 grade points. A grade of 60-70 is equivalent to a D and is awarded 1 grade point. A grade of 0-59 is a failing grade and is not awarded any grade points.

Students at the USMA must maintain at least a 1.5 grade point average to continue in their field of study.

Although testing procedures may vary according to the professor, most courses have at least a mid-semester examination and a final comprehensive examination.

The academic calendar of the master's degree programs is on the quarter system, with three-quarters and a summer session per academic year.

Universities in the Canal Area

Five higher education institutions are currently offering degrees in the Canal Zone. Many Panamanians, particularly those who work in the Canal Area, attend one of these institutions.

The Panama Canal College, which was originally established as a community college, now offers four-year programs in a limited number of fields.

Florida State University offers Bachelor's degree programs designed for US military members who want to earn credits while on active duty. Many Zonians and Panamanians have also followed a full-time course of study and received degrees in four years.

Oklahoma State University offers graduate level programs in Business Administration, Public Administration, Human Relations, and Education.

Pennsylvania State University offers Master's degrees in various fields of education for teachers hired by the PanCanal Co.

Nova University offers a Master's degree in English as a Second Language (ESL).

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

Primary and secondary teaching is a respected profession and teachers represent a large and articulate part of the country's growing middle class.

The security and professional status of the profession gained significantly from the 1946 Organic Law of Education that formally barred political influence consideration in the appointments, transfers, and dismissals of personnel.

While salaries are moderate, teachers in the interior of the country make up most of the corps of civil servants and, as such, rank after the employees of banks and financial institutions as the best paid persons in the white-collar category.

Most teachers in the primary system are certified graduates of the secondary level normal schools.

The Licenciatura is required for teaching at the secondary level. Teachers for the secondary schools are trained in Philosophy, Letters and Education at the University of Panama and other schools.

STUDENT LOANS

The Institute for the Formation and Development of Human Resources (IFARHU) is an educational credit organization that offers loans and scholarships in areas designated as priorities for national development. Founded by the government in 1975, IFARHU organizes, plans and executes assistance programs for educational purposes of all types. State institutions and private businesses also offer financial assistance to qualified students.

Priority study areas are established each year by the Ministry of Education. Loans and scholarships are not available for study in areas which are saturated, such as Medicine, Dentistry, or any other field that is offered at the University of Panama.

The maximum amount of funding available for undergraduate studies is $10,000 and includes English language studies. A maximum of $12,000 is given for graduate studies. Most recipients of financial aid receive between $100 and $150 per month.

IFARHU is currently conducting a study of the costs at universities abroad to increase the maximum amount of funding available.

IFARHU offers a university scholarship program for students graduating from secondary school with an A or B average. These scholarships are called "Becas de Honor" or "Puestos Distinguidos". They can be used for study in Panama or abroad. The number of students participating in this program varies every year.

Interest rates on IFARHU loans are very low. A grace period is given to allow graduates to find jobs, as the professional and agricultural umemployment rate in Panama is about 18 per cent.

Five per cent of IFARHU's loans are designated for undergraduate study.

Currently, 12,000 students study in graduate degree programs with IFARHU loans.

Students receiving loans must demonstrate financial need and have their application signed by two guarantors. To qualify for an IFARHU loan, students must 1) be Panamanian citizens or have lived in Panama for at least seven years, and 2) present an authenticated program of study. Students must also make a commitment to reimburse the loan fund on completion of their studies. Students wishing to study abroad with a loan must ensure that the intended field of study is not offered by any of the Panamanian universities. If the field of study is available in Panama the loan application is rejected.

The local universities also sponsor scholarship programs for eligible students. To obtain a scholarship students must: 1) Meet with admission requirements; 2) Have a minimum 3.5 grade point average in secondary school; 3) Demonstrate financial need; 4) Present a formal application to the university's rector indicating desired academic program; 5) Make a commitment to reimburse the university scholarship fund or IFARHU on completion of studies.

MAIN IN-COUNTRY SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON U. S. EDUCATION:

USIS
Biblioteca Amador Washington
Edificio Gus Romares
Esq. Federico Boyd y Av. Balboa
Panama City, Panama

IFARHU
Edificio Diorvett
Via Espana
Panama City, Panama

COSPAE
Apartado 74
Panama City 1, Panama

Ministry of Education
Dirección de Orientación Educacional
y Profesional

GLOSSARY OF TERMS:

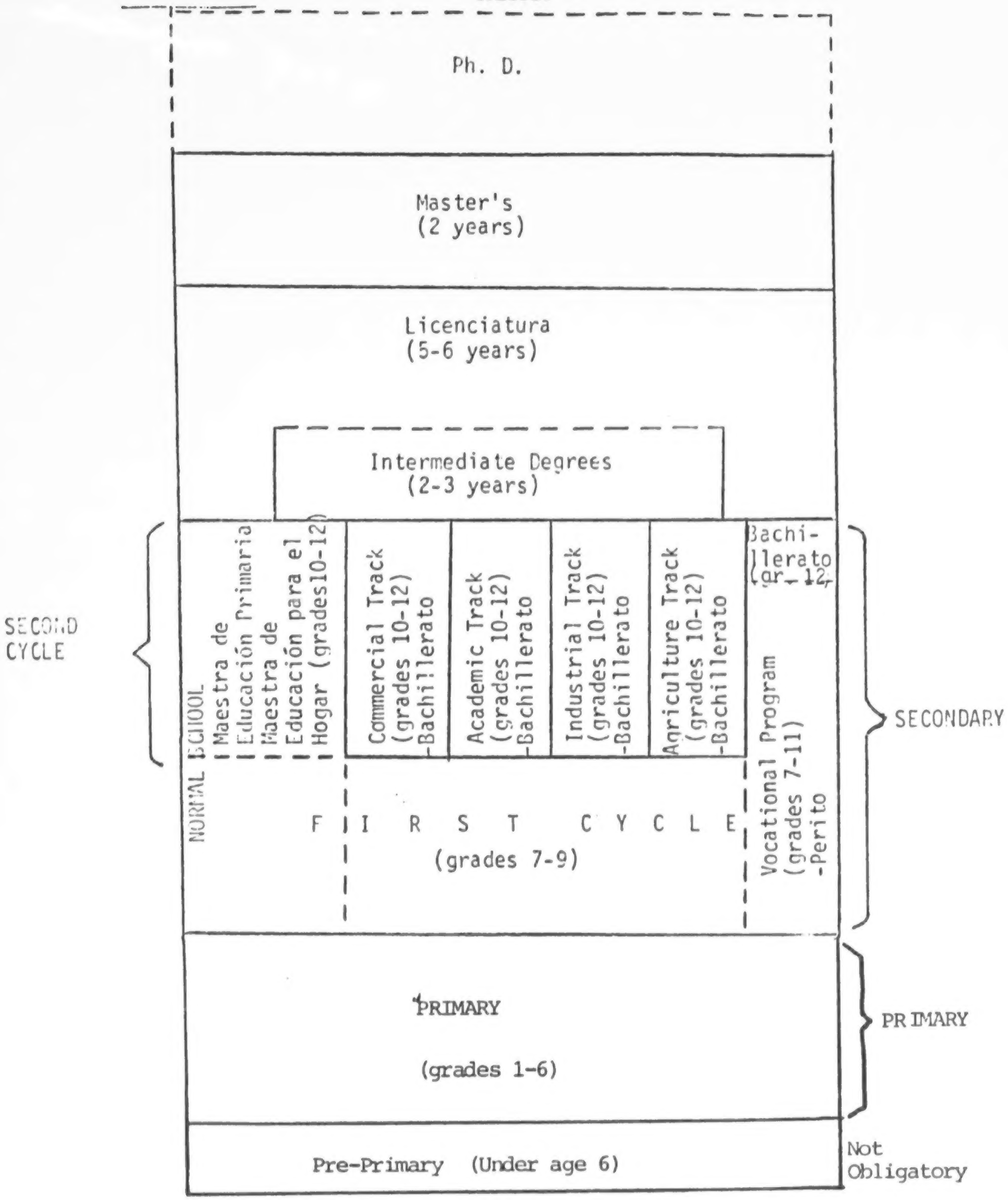
Bachillerato	academic secondary school certificate awarded upon completion of 12 years of primary-secondary education.
Becas de Honor	IFARHU scholarship program for students graduating with the highest grade point average in their class from secondary school for study at the university level.
Bueno	Good.
Capacitación y Preparatoria	courses required by the UTP providing basic Math and Science training for advanced studies. Students must pass these courses before gaining admission to any of the UTP's degree programs.

Certificado de Primaria	primary school certificate awarded on completion of the six year cycle. This certificate enables students to enter the secondary level.
Ciclo Diversificado	secondary school upper level (two to three years) Students may opt to follow one of six tracks: academic commercial, agricultural, industrial, vocational, or normal school.
Doctorate in Medicine	professional degree; awarded on completion of three years of pre-medical/ pre-professional tertiary study and four years of a professional education in Medicine.
Escuela Normal	secondary level diversified cycle program for primary school teacher training.
Fracasado	Failing.
Kinder	pre-primary education, available to children under six years of age. One year is obligatory.
Licenciatura	first university degree, awarded after completion of five to six years of study.
Maestra de Educación para El Hogar	high school certificate awarded on completion of the normal school track program for Home Economics teacher training. This diploma enables students to enter university level Education programs.

Maestra de Educación Primaria	high school certificate awarded on completion of the normal school track program for primary school teacher training. This diploma enables students to enter university level Education programs.
Malo	Poor.
Perito	secondary level diversified cycle diploma awarded on completion of the commercial track.
Plan de Estudios Generales (PEG)	plan of basic requirements included in all USMA degree programs. Thirty-six credit hours are distributed in 12 courses, including 8 electives designated by the major field of study the student plans to pursue.
Puestos Distinguidos	see: Becas de Honor.
Regular	Satisfactory.
Sobresaliente	Outstanding.
Técnico	intermediate level university degree, generally requiring two to six semesters of study.

EDUCATION LADDER

PANAMA


Ph. D.
Master's (2 years)
Licenciatura (5-6 years)
Intermediate Degrees (2-3 years)
NORMAL SCHOOL
Maestra de Educación Primaria
Maestra de Educación para el Hogar (grades10-12)
Commercial Track (grades 10-12) -Bachillerato
Academic Track (grades 10-12) -Bachillerato
Industrial Track (grades 10-12) -Bachillerato
Agriculture Track (grades 10-12) -Bachillerato
Bachillerato (gr. 12)
Vocational Program (grades 7-11) -Perito
FIRST CYCLE
(grades 7-9)
SECOND CYCLE
SECONDARY
PRIMARY
(grades 1-6)
PRIMARY
Pre-Primary (Under age 6)
Not Obligatory